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REHEARSALS

REHEARSALS

A Book of Verses

By JOHN LEICESTER WARREN

AUTHOR OF 'PHILOCTETES'



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JOAN OF ARC.

1/ If I prevail shall any might be mine ?
Lord of all conflict, is not glory thine ?
I'll get me very humbly and kneel down,
And doff my myrtle chaplet at thy shrine.

I am but fit to graze a few poor sheep :
My office once, ere Mary on my sleep
Grew in a vision reaching out a crown ;
And fed my soul with dream-delight so deep,

That not full morning with her solemn breeze
Could that sweet voice unsweeten, or make cease.
God's love it seemed to melt the mountains round,
And wings of angels rustled in the trees.

B

1 4 1

O voice eternal, glory of my dream,
Blended with every wave of languid stream,
Mingling with bleat of mother-ewes thy sound,
Or whispered far as sunset's radiant seam.

Voice, in the pine boughs beaten of great hail,
Voice, in the wrestle of the wind-mill sail,
In the jay's bicker from his mountain ground,
Or in the sun-gilt insect's feeble wail,—

I knew thee loud or gentle, far or near,
On thee I brooded day and month and year;
Till the poor herd-girl became glorified
Like an old saint with God's voice at his ear.

‘What can have crazed you, girl?’ my sire would say.
‘What gives your eyes that bright and earnest ray?’
For I indeed was strangely beautified,
Seeing I spake with Mary every day.

‘ These are weak maiden dreamings, you shall wed
And clear these bubble fancies from your head.
O, but believe me, girls are often so,
And wives no worse, when all these whims are fled.’

• The village mothers came with nod and smile ;
Indeed, good souls, they vext me with no guile,
To whisper, ‘ Where did that last vision go ?
Girl, get you wed ; you wait too long a while.’

O, but this human love I laid it by
Without one tear. The chosen maid, should I
Weep for a little sweet much flecked with stain,
Or hold brief earth’s fruition worth a sigh ?

I heard discordant voices loud in hate
Between two village lovers wedded late ;
Never shall these go hand in hand again ;
May shall return, but not their old estate.

Love ! What was love to me, when lordly France
Lay desolate as one in mortal trance ;
Beautiful mother, how for dead she lay ;
And, when the alien rider with his lance

Pierced her bright helpless bosom, as she slept,
She only moaned a little while, and kept
Her eyelids calm in sleep. But wailing they,
Her daughters fainted, as they watched and wept.

The vine lay broken in its time of flower,
The gray dry field had lost her harvest power ;
Darkness prevailed, and cloud of blood-red flame,
Heads full of languor, all hearts beating slower.

The shadow of thy death lay full on me,
Who in thy travail dared to comfort thee ;
Surely thy wail was mighty ; but none came
Except the peasant girl of Domremi.

They fled, the lordly captains of thy pride,
Who sat at wine with thee in thy good tide.
Each splendid warrior left thee, clothed in beams,
Who smiled so grandly, at his lady's side

Disdaining fear, and trifling her white hand.
They saved thee none, these proud ones, O my land.
They jested at the inn-maid, and her dreams ;
How is their valour fallen away like sand !

Thence is my glory travail to these lords ;
My myrtle sweetens up in light ; their words
Are wind, their boasting laughter ; so that these
Would joy to bind me round with prison cords,

And sell me to the alien. But God's eyes
Save me and search unsleeping their device.
So in the midst of death I take full ease,
And let them vex their hate with devil lies.

In truce, they pass me with averted head
Or whispered sneer ; but, as the fight grows red,
Be thou my witness, Mary mine, how these
Creep to the shadow of my sword in dread,

Crying, ' O maid, our wretched soldiers flee,
Rally and lead them up. In all but thee
Our hope is broken, and fair France will cease
Out from the kingdoms perished utterly ! '

God knows, the trampled war with furnace breath
Seemed meadowy silence set with elms, beneath
Warmed of slow breezes, when some vision stood
Before my steed flashing the pale Christ's death.

Or sudden blue eyes of the virgin's face
Grew on the ramparts in the storming place,
And smiled me up past iron men and blood ;
How easy then to win the breach ! Her gaze

And sweet mild voice among the ringing swords
Came only to her maid in gracious words.
Sustained of such high comfort could I yield
To some poor brutish soldier ; whose rough lords

Haled him from wine-cups and worse revellings
To be my triumph ; whom the yellow wings
Of angels shaded in dry autumn field ;
And unseen fingers at my armour strings

Continually lightened the strange toil
And chafe of morion, with sweet holy oil
Bathing my maiden brows ; so I rode on
Greatly rejoicing ; tho' the cracked white soil

Lay sick and gaping in fierce steamy light,
And the glare seethed the hollow land like blight,
And all fair leaf was poisoned for much sun ;
I, onwards riding, knew not for delight.

Since on my lips some pure stream never dry
Came with remembrance of moist herbs thereby,
With scent of bays that trail leaves in its run,
And gray shelves dripping on continually.

By Mary's aid I rode with keen sweet air,
Where the lark fainted up in heaven for glare,
Where my steed trod to sulphur-dust the ground
Of burning pastures paler than despair.

Yet, God he knows, the flesh itself was weak,
And how for ruth my handmaids could not speak,
If, easing off at night my helm, they found
The eating iron dints on brow and cheek ;

They wept ; mere girls and foolish rose-red flowers
Whose blind brief loves made worship for their hours,
Fit to trill little songs about a rose,
Or trim their raiment up in latticed bowers,

And cackle, and lean heads at some boy knight
Mincing along in samite, curled and bright—
Ah, lord, I never set my heart with those,
Who yearn to taste ere death the bride's delight.

Sweet is the trouble of the child ; and sweet
To guide the baby hand and feeble feet.
The fair light softens in a mother's eyes
To cherish on her breast its helpless heat.

I held love cheaper than the patient dead ;
Lonely I followed where thy visions led ;
Nor made God weary with sick looks and sighs,
But went with gleaming eye and festal tread.

As morning greatens into gold from rose,
As a gale fresh with orchard fragrance blows,
As organ-waftings thro' some minster door,
Thy message and thy breath in my repose

Whispered, ' Arise in armour,' and right fain,
As some king treads the vintage of the slain,
I went alone, and on the wine-press floor
My maiden feet were red with onset stain.

As some high captain clad in battle gear
Leaning at even on his deadly spear,
I, the mere maiden of an inn before,
Grew great to shatter kingdoms with my fear.

Therefore I said, thou art low, but God most great,
Mighty to bruise down strong ones in their state,
Calls from her flocks some mean and simple maid,
And breathes into her arm a Titan weight.

Is not all strength his doing and his own?
Even the glorious seraphs near his throne,
If God forgot to strengthen them, would fade
Abolished, in their place no longer known.

He feeds them with his face and they are bright.
He turns him and they perish. In his sight
The ancient stars are glad : the sun arrayed
To burn along the pathway of his might.

He shall remember and forget not one.
He binds into its orbit many a sun ;
Allows the daisy fringes vernal red,
And folds away the flower when day is done.

He binds the broken weed up with his balm.
The sons of pride are crushed beneath his arm.
The iron hills are melted at his tread,
But on the worm his shower and light are warm.

Thou royal of my land without a throne,
France, O sweet mother, cheated from thine own,
Betrayed of laggard sons, who groaned outworn,
' God's anger smites our cities one by one ;'

‘ Therefore hang up thy spear and give him way.
Who may resist his vengeance for a day ?
His fury will not falter, tho’ we mourn ;
If we go out against him he will slay.’

Who gave his incense up to God for thee ?
God answered no great abbot on his knee.
Such voices found a shepherd maid at morn
Down in the pleasant fields at Domremi.

So once as strangely had God’s might appeared.
Hill fronting hill the rival camps lay reared.
Who slew Gath’s Titan save a shepherd boy,
While strong Saul kept his tent and Israel feared ?

So I, God aiding, of no might my own
Have trampled this invading giant down,
And set my heel upon him to destroy,
As some great angel bruises the snake’s crown.

O great King, fair and noble, my poor hand
Could lead thee to thy crowning and command.
'March on, my lord ; the God we glory in
Will lead us scathless thro' a hostile land.'

How dumb the armies lay on either side.
No clarion blew or banner floated wide ;
Their limbs dissolved beneath them, tranced in sin,
They saw the terrible God, whom they defied,

Lead thro' their ranks his chosen void of fear.
They rose ; their trembling hands refused the spear.
No sound of fight assailed our sacred band.
No arrow flew against us. God was near.

So, as in golden silences of dreams,
We journeyed onwards by the happy streams,
By blue small hills like flowers about the land,
Till in the distance, lo, the gates of Rheims.

Then we rode in thro' lanes of beaming eyes,
O'er roses strewn like sea-plains at sunrise,
Under gay windows rocking with acclaim,
Till the cathedral, keen on crisp gray skies,

Uprose in many pinnacles before
Our yearning eyes ; wide lay each monster door
Set with stone saint-guards ; under these we came
On cooler air, and dim great burnished floor ;

Vast column'd spaces full of sound and blaze ;
The pealing organ and the incense haze ;
The concourse surging, as when shafted flame
Smites down among the restless ocean-ways.

There in the midst I set him throned in light
Ruler indeed of nations. On his right
I stood in full steel clothed, and over me
Displayed the sacred ensign ; where God's might

Easily held the islands in his palm,
The rounded heaven, the long light ocean-calm,
Yea, as babe-fingers hold a ball, so he.
And all the banner edge was bloom of warm

And dove-bright lilies pure as Heaven's own—
Then I reached out and laid on him his crown,
Shed oil, and gave him orb and sceptre-wand,
Regent of God, whom none should trample down.

Then all my soul was bathed in large delight ;
Kneeling to clasp his knees, my sense and sight
Failed in a rush of triumph pure and grand,
Among the hymns, the incense, and the light.

My consummation this. I should have died.
Earth gives no more till Heaven's gate open wide.
I have lived and done my joy, content to cease,
And ease me from the armour of my pride.

I will return, resuming ancient days,
To those few sheep along the mountain ways.
My very soul is hungry after peace :
Resume, O Lord, thy sword, accept my bays.

Note. The return of Joan from Rheims in July, 1429, is taken as the period of this sketch, since it seems the acme of her success, before her self-faith had been shaken by reverses and captivity.

MISREPRESENTATION.

PEACE, there is nothing more for men to speak ;

A larger wisdom than our lips' decrees.

Of that dumb mouth no longer reason seek.

No censure reaches that eternal peace,

And that immortal ease.

Believe them not that would disturb the end

With earth's invidious comment, idly meant.

Speak and have done thine evil ; for my friend

Is gone beyond all human discontent,

And wisely went.

Say what you will and have your sneer and go.

You see the specks, we only heed the fruit

Of a great life, whose truth—men hate truth so—

No lukewarm age of compromise could suit.

Laugh and be mute !

C

HOW IT ENDS.

TAKE off thy hands, leave me and let us end.
Peace, we have done our pastime ; why contend ?
But, if thou wilt, bemoan love's altered power,
Cover thy eyes and have thy weeping hour.
Love cannot turn the stars, or loose their bands.
Take off thy hands.

How dead he lies our smiling mock of love,
With all the lies he spake, the tales he wove :
How beautiful his fallen lustre seemed ;
Ah, we wake now, but surely then we dreamed,
That there was nothing fair on sea or land
As Love's light hand.

He will not rise, so heavy is his ear :
He will not waken, tho' thou rouse him near :
Shall his eyes smile, tho' thou make bright thine own,
Shall his pulse falter to thy voice alone ?
Shall he resume old empire at command ?
Loose, loose thy hand.

Nay, for a little, poor and little hour,
Soft were his lips, his breathing like a flower,
Whose petals breathe incense as to a song.
But this, ah, this is changed so very long.
Since who can tell the wind and show his way
To-morrow say.

Let him depart, have ending, sleep or die,
Crown him with flowers or ashes, how care I ?
Languish in chains or free abound in praise,
To us at least until the end of days
He comes not, when the flower is in the sod
And spring is God.

Live in thy peace : remove me from thy thought.
Live to thyself or be by lover sought,
Try our old ways of loving in new eyes,
Bring to the glare old grace of secret sighs,
Clothe thee with love, but leave me in my rest
Of all things best.

Why should I break my slumber to revile
Love, if thine lay no deeper than thy smile?
Shall I abase my soul at thy sweet call?
Thou art a weak girl only after all.
Peace and repose are all that I demand.
Release thy hand.

PANDORA.

A DIALOGUE.

PROMETHEUS. EPIMETHEUS. PANDORA.

EPIMETHEUS.

PEACE, in the bright courts of the tyrant, peace !
Rest, for the sweet world slain beneath his frown !
The strange sound deepens, peace ! our war is done.
Strangely hath Zeus remembered mercy now.
The prince god folds away his deadly shafts.
The strong one moves his arrow from its string,
Softens his stern lip-corners to a smile,
And reaches out, as friend with friend, his hand
Grown tired with hurling down perpetual death.
Evil indeed that battle where none win.
Weary is he and weary am I of war ;
He, the unwearied, hungers for his rest.

If neither race prevail, as neither may,
It is an idle thing with lidless eyes
To watch each other, each bereaved of calm.
We can disturb his ease, he ruin ours,
And still no truce, no interval, no respite.
Rejoice, if now be done these bitter ways ;
Break into song and take hereafter ease.
Smile, O thou warrior Titan, smile at last
To find love fairer than perpetual fear.
Behold, what love I bring thee, clear as air,
Strange as a dream, soft as a mountain down,
And moulded as the pauses of a song ;
Even such a gracious thing and excellent
I found this woman, in the shining lands
Beyond the meadow parcels of blown seed,
Languid as one from slumber newly come,
And still her eyes had soft desire of sleep.
In wonder I beheld and made no word,
Till of herself she moved her lips to sound ;
' Thus to the Titan saith the lord of clouds,

O race, unwearied, full of war and toil,
Fate is more strong than your contentious arms.
Ye hate, shall hatred then unsceptre Zeus,
Or anger empty any throne in heaven ?
I fear you not and yet ye weary me :
That our old strife may therefore merge and die,
I send this woman for a marriage gift.
Let her accomplish peace for me with thine,
Prometheus : be content : I have forgiven.
Thine old rebellions I have put away,
And my reward outweighs the harm I gave thee.
Shall not her love efface the thunder scars,
Wherewith I drave thee backward from my realm ?
Therefore I joying led her to thy face,
Here where the red cliff fronts the flats of sand,
And short salt grasses cease in mountain sedge.

PROMETHEUS.

Art sister to the race of sleep and dust,
Or goddess scorning kinship with the dead ?

PANDORA.

The ruler sends me as his daughter down
To kneel and touch thy strong hand with meek lips,
His daughter and his gift, saying, be friends,
Take her and love her, Titan, but forgive.

PROMETHEUS.

Is Zeus grown sudden-generous to his foes ?

PANDORA.

Nay, but it irks him thro' eternal hours
To hold his arrow always on the string.

PROMETHEUS.

Hast thou alone, O maid, of living souls,
Heard this thing speak, as men speak, word and tone ?
I feel his hand is heavy indeed to slay,
But he will never face me eye to brow.
I should not greatly fear him, tyrant, then ;
But now he lets his mischiefs speak for him.

PANDORA.

Zeus in my waking life I have not seen ;
A swift dream brought this word, faded and went,
Before thy brother's footstep snapt my sleep.
From my birth-trance in wonder I arose.
But of my past remembrance none remains.
I know not if I lived ere this day woke ;
Or in what fields I wandered other hours.
Yet earth is half familiar to mine eyes ;
And in my thought old broken images
Mix with the present and confuse me wholly.
I am as one, who, eating some strange root,
Loses life-record in the taste of it.

PROMETHEUS.

I praise thee nothing, brother, for thy joy.
If thou hast found a marvel, to thy harm
This crafty Zeus hath brought thy feet to find,
And stumble on his most pernicious gift.
Wiser have left it in the meadow reeds,

Gotten thee home again and had no heed.
Doth Zeus repent and love us, O unwise ?
Shall we not rather weary out the stars,
Eons and eons with this feud of ours.
Wrinkles will creep on the eternal sun,
And all large hills be vallied in waste seas,
Ere one prevail ? Conquest alone is Peace.
And now, forsooth, he overflows with gifts.
Much careth he, the crafty, how I wed.
Nay, this is some delusion of his own
To work me death : this thing being wonderful,
Specious, a fair trap to hold bound men's eyes ;
Since she is smooth and pleasant as a wave,
Fresh as a sea-flower, polished as its sea ;
With a sweet subtle sadness haunting her,
And ruling all her beauty with a calm
That is the crown of beauty ; being fair,
As the gods give their daughters to be fair,
Still grace divine disdaining much to weep
And far above all laughter. Such an one

As this beholding the fool human heart
Leaps greatly, is suffused with blind delight,
As tho' it stumbled on some mighty good
Entreated long of the deaf gods in prayer.
But this soft creature with her gracious ways
And warmth and perfume and light fugitive glances,
Whence is her birth, my brother, whence her charm?
Who wove the amber light into her hair,
Who gave her all the changes of her eyes?
Who framed the treasures of her breast, and carved
The balmy marvel of her throat, whose hand
Fashioned the silver curving shoulder down?
Who clothed her limbs with colour like soft fruit,
Who wrought and rounded her swift gleaming feet?
Come, let us reason this, desire is blind,
And brief is love that follows of desire ;
Yea, very brief, but often at the end
Treason and fire and poison, death and harm.
Titans are we, not wholly gods, but more
Than gods in this, if we possess our souls.

Why should we hanker after her sweet hands ?
Let her be lovelier than the birth of light,
Why should the incense of her presence move
The soul-engirded Titan from resolve
To have no dealing with the false arch-god,
But to let always the clear flame of hate
Burn steadily between his house and ours ?
Can Zeus being evil give good gifts at all ?
Can he renounce his nature in an hour ?
Can he be piteous even to harmless men,
And these have done no insult to his throne ?
But we the Titan seed alone endure,
And quail not, when he thunders in a world
Where all things else are chained beneath his feet.
We toss defiance to his arrogant face,
While all sweet nature grovels at his heel.
Us he detests, us he abhors, us fears :
Wilt thou have gift of such, for I will none ?

PANDORA.

Cruel art thou, Prometheus, being wise

And yet not greatly cunning after all.
Art thou no match for one weak girl that weeps,
Thou Titan that would mate thyself with Zeus?
Tears are my wisdom, and my speech alone
To kneel and put my cheek against thy hand,
And weep a little over it and say,
' Fear me, my King, for I am terrible.'
I, utterly broken, weaker than a weed,
Am God's strong vengeance whom these Titans fear.
She is worth trembling at, this girl that weeps,
And awful, being melted into tears,
Sighing she threatens and entreating slays :
Zeus and his fire then fear not, but fear me.
Woe, then, to the arch-god's crown, wail for his throne ;
How shall his ruling comfort him at all ?
Doth he not vainly build pavilion clouds,
And bind sweet crisping heaven beneath his feet,
That he tread firm and warmly in his realms ;
And when these Titans scorn and spit at him,
Can he invent no vengeance but a girl ?

Thou sayest this Zeus is evil, let him be ;
How should a woman reason of the gods ?
Yet are they fierce and strange and sullen lords,
As thy word goes ; they faint not, neither weep ;
Shall they repent, be broken, bow them down ?
Surely they shall not falter or remove,
Tho' they rule blind and stay themselves on fear.
Revile them ; what have I to do with these ?
Heal thou my tears ; I care not how they rule.
I only know that I am desolate,
Since thou dost turn away thy gracious eyes
In anger, saying, ' This woman means me death.'
Excellent Titan, O great king, my light,
To whom my nature blindly feels for aid,
Hath not some fateful power supreme and strange
Impelled me to thy presence, laid mine arms
With feeble claspings at thy mighty knees,
Saying, ' Behold thy king, adore him then
Lord of thy service, master of thy days.'
Do then my trembling arms and suppliant hands,

My lids unlifted, my short eager breath,
Do these resemble Death and Vengeance so,
That thou must push me off and stride away?
Thy hard eyes reason on each tear I shed;
With wise incurious musings, careless cold,
Gloating on me unbeautified in pain,
Thou weighest all my movements of despair.
Lo, one word spoken and my lips are mute;
I, that am held this subtle poison plague,
This utmost curse, born of thy tyrant's hate,
I even, I, strewn in this dust, demand;
Doth the vine, feeling for her elm to raise
Her frail limp garland-branch and pendant rings,
Mean any death to that which is her stay?
On whom her feeble arms may lean and thrive,
Since lonely and without him die she must?
Ah, such a death, ah, such a loving curse
Would I be round thee, my great elm, my king;
Ah, such a trouble my warm arms, such fear
My love, such hate my kisses. Let Zeus be;

Can he turn my love backward if he choose,
Can he command desire as babes are led ?
God is not strong against a woman's love ;
And, tho' Zeus lust to crush thy race and thee,
Zeus will not make me harm thee, if I love.
Nature is more than any god of these.
Let mercy guide thee if love may not lead.
Thou art so great and wise, my puny love
Would only vex thee, like an insect's wing
Scarce worthy to be brushed in scorn aside.
Let me remain and dream not to be loved,
Where I may hear thy voice, and watch thine eyes,
And the large gleams of purpose in their light ;
Healer of worlds, thou godlier than all gods ;
In whom the warm half mortal human heart
Tempers chill ichors of Olympian veins.
Leave me thy presence only ; for I faint
In this sweet nature mateless and alone.
The steep gray woods, the broken mountain halls
Crush me with power. The lonely wave on the cliff

Has tongue to make me tremble. The crisp cloud
Rolling along shadows me like a fear.
And all the old stern creations of the world,
Founded for ever, lovely and most still,
Oppress my soul ; till in their ageless eyes
I seem to usurp in daring to live on.
Yea, the large luminous unclouded Heaven
Narrows about me full of voice and whisper.
Let me from these gray ancient presences
Creep to thy shadow and assuage my dread.
Let me lie down with thy strong hunting dogs
And guard the curtain-fold against thy tent ;
Make me thy slave, no more ; almost thy hound.
Employ me in some petty useful way,
To watch thee sleeping and draw panther skins
Warm to thy shoulder ; as soft equal night
Alters to chill touched by sweet scent of dawn.
Or I have old-world harmonies to sing
And fill thy wakeful eyes with folded sleep ;
But in keen day, when thy wise thought has wing,

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Vain words of mine thy musings shall not break,
But I will sit and love and be most still.

EPIMETHEUS.

Wisdom is much, my brother : thou art wise.
But reason over-strained is folly's thrall.
Can this white perfect creature, excellent,
Clothed in the lovely colour of pale light,
Round her the scent of rainy forest pines,
With hair like soft bents full of seed and flower,
Lie with her lips against her sacred form ?
Most holy must she be that is so fair ;
Her fresh young beauty answers for her truth.
I hold thee then intolerably wise
To dare make weep a thing so strangely sweet.
Prove her untruth ; I am content to seem
For such delicious falsehood wholly fool.
If thy perfection be the mask of guile,
Slay me, sweet lily ; I accept my doom.
For how should I in after hours endure,

If one year's wing reveal thee as divine,
As we accept thee lovely, and discern
Beautiful glory in thine outward frame,
If, fearing stain or ambush taint within,
I roughly move thee from my path, and go
A fool for ever aping wisdom ill.
But, O my brother, what a shaken life
Broken with lees, stained with great drops and dust,
Thou buildest to thy soul renouncing love,
Scoffing at rest and spitting out at peace.
And thou art ever railing on this Zeus ;
Clothed round and haunted with perpetual fear,
And drooping at his vengeance. Dream thy fill,
Thou wakest up with Zeus ; at festival
There is thy Zeus in every cup again.
So now this phantom scares thee from the joy
Holy and best, commended of all gods.
Wilt thou refuse this glowing lovely fruit
Lest Zeus should put thee poison in its rind ?
I charge thee, brother, it is a fearful thing,

Worthy of endless pity and disdain,
To maim thy soul with fast and pinion her
In solitude for ever. Love is great,
His foemen will be broken at the end,
His wheels are mighty. Titan, then arise,
Touch with thy hand her bright hair suppliant ;
Raise her and fold around her thy great arms.
Take thy delight upon her fruitful lips ;
So make her nature blossom with thy love,
So bind her with strong influence wholly thine,
So strengthen thee at the springs of her fresh life,
Till thou wax more Titanic, and expand
Thy lordly nature to new stateliness ;
Till thou redouble might, and scoff at fear,
And the arch-father of thy fear above ;
Till thou, may be, in comfortable halls,
No longer roaming under icy stars,
Titan, in vengeance eating down thy heart ;
Or toiling on the sterile lands of storm,
Knee-deep in ruins of the mountain cone,

Or tumbled fields of pine ; shalt warm at home
Listen the light wail of the nurseling child,
And hear the mother murmuring over it,
With cradle-kisses broken, songs of sleep.
And, if eternal conflict must prevail
With thee and thine against the thunder-kings,
Let us breed offspring, nobler yet than we,
Sustaining sterner onset ; to outpass
Our deed in larger prowess ; tear their thrones
Away, as withered branches, out of heaven ;
Efface them, and rule calmly in their seat
To teach man better comfort than their reign.

PROMETHEUS.

The tune of thy word is anguish in my ear,
The taste of thy persuasion bitter lees ;
Grievous to hear at wise lips idiot sound.
Art thou too blinded of this subtle king ?
Hath he brought vapour on thy soul, and cloud
Against thy reason ? So some witless bird

Toys with delight among the painted weed,
But overhead forgets the hawk at poise.
O tremble then, ye Titans, for your house :
I hear Zeus rouse his brothers to the field,
I see them smile as if they scented death,
I hear the grinding of their chariot-wheels.
They shall prevail, their hour is at the doors.
Yea, let them go and pluck bay-garlands soon,
Let glory clothe them ; they have smitten well ;
Prepare thy face, O Titan, for their heels,
Put down a patient neck for them to tread.
Ay me, the lordly race, so proud it was,
Totters before them ; scorn is rightly theirs,
Since no worm turns on earth against them now.
And, by my soul, this shall hereafter be,
If for one shining bauble thy heart fails,
If great resolve quails under eye-delight.
Thy blind confusions cloud my plainest word ;
Mine eyes as thine pronounce her beautiful ;
Lovely she is and true perchance may be.

But this 'perchance' is a wide slippery word,
And in its foldings there are many deaths.
I will believe, a thing so pure in grace
Is in herself most clean of evil mind;
She knows no death in each of her sweet hands.
Her could I love, if, over all, this stern
Supremest hate, whose eyelids vanquish sleep,
Held not its lidless watch to torture us.
If this prevail, lean mercy will be ours,
Exquisite hurting, and most cruel pain.
Therefore who sets to cope with Zeus his face,
Hath slender hours of pastime, and lays by
Love that is born, as some soft flower in dreams,
The season lily of a wintry spring ;
Must lay love by for ever and a day,
And childless gird him braver for the fight,
And wage securer onset ; if each child
Is a new wounding place that he must guard,
A new rift in his harness to defend
Against the subtle vengeance ; keen of eye ;

Finger on bow ; crouched snake-like ; arrows near.
He too that would not bend to save himself
Will crawl to save his children ; let me gain
A lonely glory or a childless fall.
Therefore I do refuse her fair and true,
False or unfair, resign her either way.
He, who has made her in his craft, may guide
Her darkened eyes in roads where is no light,
Nor any song, but noise of smitten breasts,
Wrung hands, tear-weeping, hiss and ache of woe.
Is she not then his instrument and blind ?
As we could train her in all gracious ways
He will mislead her simple hands to harm,
She guileless all the while. O brother, fear her ;
Blind are steps, her master terrible,
And hungry with the famine of old hate
To crush our race out in red fire and gloom.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

A wild sweet star in amber folds of morn,

A violet pale in fields of twisted tares ;
The lovely queen Pandora, newly born,
Leaving her native ether unawares
And regions golden in celestial dawn,
Descends refreshing nature ; as the rain
In pale sward renders daisy faces plain,
Earth at thy coming wakens all her rills,
The fountain heads remurmur, the light wave
At the vale mouth a sweeter tribute spills ;
And, once sonorous under mountain cave,
The many winds are dead and done away ;
Or up in broken spaces of the hills
Among the ravens and the tumbled crags,
Some breeze goes gentle as a child at play.
The lowland rapid crisp with ruffled flags,
The still tarn rippled by the marten's wing,
The fleet unresting waters of the sea,
Are shaken in the light of dædal spring.
The shadows pass away because of thee,
Pandora, crown of all created things.

A large deep music gathers from the land ;
The gray cliff-head, the burnished island spire
Tremble in lucid haze as veins of fire.
The pale waves spend their foam and push the sand,
Furrow and whiten, shatter and retire.
Thy loveliness is as the moon's command
To sway them as she will and make them flow ;
They are amazed at thy ethereal brow.
The fear of thy bride-beauty, and the love
That changes fear till fear grows strangely sweet,
Make nature listen if thou dost but move,
And thrill the meadow-grasses at thy feet.
The watery saffron, gentian, bloom of light,
The lilies of the moorland amber-eyed,
Sigh toward thee passing ; the dew-spider weaves
Weak webs to tangle thy bright steps aside,
The woodbine reaches ineffectual leaves.
Beautiful sister, let us come to thee ;
Fear not our worship, flee not, holy one,
Be thy sweet breath about us like the sea,

Be thy pure brow above us as the sun.
Be to us breath and ocean, light and spring,
Reward us only with thy presence, bring
Thyself, and be the deity of these ;
Rule us and love us, and there shall not cease,
O queen, thine adoration. Let thy hands
Be near us for our worship, and thy hair
Unfolded for our wonder ; as the sands
New washed of tide are coloured, when waves spare
Some of their liquid glowing as they go
To leave them bright a little. But thy brows
Have bound bright heavy sunlight on their snows
For a perpetual spoil. Thou dost not know
The stint and fluctuation of the tide ;
For thou art clothed with fair on every side ;
Thou art no cloud allowed one hour to glow.
Nay, for thy lord who stablished thee so sweet,
Hath put all change beneath thy perfect feet,
Hedged thee with honour excellent ; made Praise
A drudge to hew thee wood, and Love to watch and wait ,

A slave beside a lute-string, to make thee easy ways
Of sleep, when pastime-wearied, and bondman to thy
state.

Yea, and thine eyes shall see meek Love beside thee,
And smile a little, as not over-glad,
Being too royal, with no joy denied thee,
Than to be otherwise than grandly sad.
As the gods laugh not overmuch, indeed
They laugh or weep not ; what is worth their weeping ?
Sweet youth fails not beneath them like a reed,
The shadow and the shine are in their keeping.
The large deep flows on under them, the cloud
Is strewn along their tables, and the light
Is broad about them, when the wind is loud ;
And the deep gates of sunset in their sight
Burn with the broken day. But these maintain
High state as always. Their hands reap and slay
Nor render any reason. They are fain,
Because their rule cannot be put away ;
Because their arrows swerve not when they draw,

Because their halls are winter-proof, their hate
Mighty and fat with store of death, their law
Shod with the iron permanence of fate.
Being cruel, they can glut their cruel will ;
Wrathful, allow their wrath its utmost way ;
Insatiate, can almost lust their fill ;
Listless, can drowse on tinted cloud all day,
Lulled by the nations wailing as they pray—
Nay, let us break our song nor think on these.
To thee this conflict, Titan, doth belong ;
We are but weak, as ineffectual seas
That roll and spill their foam-lines all day long—
She is as lovely, lord, as thou art strong.
To us she cometh as some strange desire ;
As a bird's voice thro' silence in the night :
As scent of oaken woods : or perfumed fire
Floated among the pines in curling spire :
The loosening of her ringlets is like light.
Refresh thy lordly spirit at her lips,
They shall renew thy soul with subtle power.

Turn thee, O lord, to thy desired repose ;
Time hath made ripe for thee this perfect flower,
And folded up her fragrance like a rose.
Arise and take thy joy and dream no wrong ;
Who shall assail thee in thy mighty hall ?
Ours let it be to sing thy nuptial song,
Until some beam auroral touch the trees,
And wake thy palace with an ouzel's call ;
And in sweet hush the perfumed wing of morn
Arrive on amber cloud and shaken breeze.

A HEBREW LAMENT AFTER DEFEAT.

THOU hast thrust us away to a corner

As refuse beneath.

Thou hast given our cheek to the scorner,

And broken our teeth.

Thou hast hired us to death without wages,

Because of our sins.

Thou hast fastened our feet into cages,

And trapped them in gins.

Thou hast shattered the joints of our harness

And loosened our greaves.

Thou hast made us light dross in the furnace,

Gray blight in the leaves.

Thou hast altered our marvellous places
To pasture for cranes.
Thou hast broken the flesh of our faces
With leprosy stains.

Thou hast wrought us reproof with thine arrow,
Dismay with thy spear.
Thou hast probed all our bones to the marrow,
And slain us with fear.

The rebuke of thy wasting is grievous
As death on our tribe.
Our glory and excellence leave us ;
Fools mutter and gibe.

The beam of our sun's way is broken ;
Our moon bows her head.
In the core of our sunset thy token
Is darkness for red.

To the field we ran under thy mantle,

Arrayed in thy name.

Behold us a fragment, a cantle,

A city of shame.

They are slain, who arose in thy shelter,

They lie gray in sleep.

In the plash of the vine-hills they welter,

Like plague-eaten sheep.

They are snared in their trust. They are weaker

Than sleep, who were strong.

Will they sit with the lute-string and beaker

At feasting or song?

Will they rise and reach lips to their spouses,

And govern their hinds?

Will they rule with delight in their houses?

Weak are they as winds.

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Will they whine to the snow that she spare them,
Or harbour in rain ?
Can they tell thee the mother that bare them,
Or pleasure from pain ?

All these have inherited silence,
Past favour, past light ;
Thou hast sold them away to the islands,
Whose ocean is night.

Out of mind in the desolate porches
And precinct of shade,
They, desiring in dimness no torches,
Forget they were made.

Shall they smite with the sword, or be smitten,
Bring spoil or be spoiled ?
They are past as a dream ; who has written
In books how they toiled ?

They were sleek in all fulness of treasure,
Sweet wine and soft bread ;
They shone, till a tyrannous measure
Was dealt to them dead.

Wilt thou speak ? We are melted with trouble ;
They sleep, we remain ;
Wilt thou save, and restore to us double
The blood of our slain ?

Bring again thine own flock to their feeding
In sweet pasture ways.
In thine hand there is fulness exceeding,
All fatness of days.

Thou hast broken thy vineyard in anger
And wasted its shoots ;
Thou hast said to the son of the stranger,
'Go, trample the fruits.'

In rush-pits and reed-beds uncertain
We wander till morn.
We are clothed round with death as a curtain,
Our raiment is scorn.

Our slain people lie in each gate-way.
Our city for shroud
Has the smoke of her burning a great way
Seen yellow in cloud.

Remove as keen hoar-frost thine evil,
Refresh drought with dew.
Restore our brave summers thy weevil
And canker-worm slew.

Bring delight in our desolate garden ;
Slay these whom we hate.
Sprinkle ash in their eyes ; give us pardon ;
Sow grass in their gate.

AN ODE.

SIRE of the rising day,
Lord of the fading ray,
King of sweet ways of morn or daylight done.
Ruler of cloud and sleep,
Whose tread is on the deep,
Whose feet are red in glory like the sun.
Whose hand binds up the winds as in a sheaf,
Whose shadow makes them tremble like a leaf.

Lordship and Fear are thine,
Upon whose brow divine
Thy diadem of pale eternal fire
Burns over eyes that fear

No stain of earthly tear,
Nor soften for a yearning world's desire.
The treasure of strong thunder at thy hand
Waits like an eagle watching thy command.

Thee rosy beams enshroud ;
Rich airs and amber cloud
Reach the calm golden spaces of thy hall.
The floods awake with noise
Churning the deep, whose voice,
Thou heedest not ; altho' the storm-wind call,
And break beneath the swollen vapour-bands,
In wild rains wearing at the sodden lands.

Can then our weak-winged prayer
Ascend and touch thee there,
Sailing between the gleaming gates of heaven ?
Can our wail climb and smite
Thy council-seat of light ?
Where for a garment is the moon-ray given

To clothe thy shoulders, and blue star-dust strown
Bickers about the borders of thy throne.

Ah, Lord, who may withstand
One reaching of thy hand,
Who from thy fury fence his house secure?
What citadel is there,
In lifted hand or prayer?
If all the radiant heaven may not endure
The scathing of thine anger, keen to blight,
The strong stars rolling in their fields of light.

Arise and take thine ease,
For thou art Lord ; and these
Are but as sprinkled dust before thy power.
Art thou the less divine,
If they lift hands and whine,
Or less eternal since they crawl an hour?
After a little pain to fold their hands,
And perish like the beasts that tilled their lands.

They dug their field and died,
Believed thee or denied ;
Cursed at thy name, or fed thy shrine with fume.
Loved somewhat, hated more,
Hoarded, grew stiff and sore,
Gat sturdy sons to labour in their room ;
Became as alien faces in their land ;
Died, worn and done with as a waste of sand.

Strong are alone the dead.
They need not bow the head,
Or reach one hand in ineffectual prayer.
Safe in their iron sleep
What wrong shall make them weep,
What sting of human anguish reach them there ?
They are gone safe beyond the strong one's reign,
Who shall decree against them any pain ?

Will they entreat in tears
The evil-laden years

To sprinkle trouble gently on their head ?
Safe in their house of grass,
Eternity may pass,
And be to these an instant in its tread,
Calm as an autumn night, brief as the song
Of the wood dove. The dead alone are strong.

Love is not there or Hate,
Weak slaves of feebler fate ;
Their lord is nothing here. They dare not come.
All pretty toys that vex,
Great problems that perplex,
And, worst, all vague life-hungers here are dumb.
Their day is over. Sad they silence keep,
Abashed before the perfect crowning sleep.

DAPHNE.

THE floating Moon went down the tract of night ;
The rosiness of sunset yellowed down
Into a lighted argent at the roots
Of the soft clouds that bore her. All day long
In devious forest, grove; and fountain side
The God had sought his Daphne. The sweet light
Had left him in his searching, but desire
Immortal held all slumber from his brain,
And drove him like a restless dream among
The pale and sylvan valleys. Here each branch
Swayed with a glitter all its crowded leaves,
And brushed the soft divine hair touching them
In ruffled clusters, as Apollo strode
Among the foliage.

Suddenly the Moon

Smoothed herself out of vapour-drift, and made
The deep night full of pleasure in the eye
Of her sweet motion. Not alone she came
Leading the starlight with her like a song ;
And not a bud of all that undergrowth
But crisped, and tingled out an ardent edge
As the light steeped it ; over whose massed leaves
The portals of illimitable sleep
Faded in heaven. The chambers of the dawn
Lay lordless yet, and, till the prime beam, gray.

As some cloud-vapour caught among the pines,
Alone in dim white shadow Phoebus went
To seek her : only on his lip and brows
Descended glory ; otherwise the God,
His noble limbs marbled in moonlight, came,
While on the crag-face infinite blue pines
Crowded the vales, and, seeming in the mist
Themselves as vapour, faded tier on tier.

And as he wandered from the lips divine
Came this complaining of the love-lorn god :—
' Beautiful Daphne, eagle-bird of the hills ;
O lovely Daphne, sleek and slender fawn ;
The wild bee hides her store among the rocks,
Thou hidest up thy beauty in these hills ;
Why in the wasting of the mountain side
Dost thou delight, my darling, still to cower
Behind gray boulders ? As some little fern
Draws in its feathery tresses underneath
Some fountain slab, and trembles half the day
At each vale whisper. O my little neat
And twinkling mountain lizard, rustling in
Between the shadows, nestling a bright side ;
A moment shining out into the light,
Gone like a flash. My silent dove of the woods,
Thou fearest lest thy song reveal thy nest.
Thou tremblest as a dew-drop at my tread.
Is my glance deadly, and my love unkind ?
That thou wilt never set thy fugitive cheek

Against my lips an instant, till my breath
Revive thee ; till thy timid eyes look up
And smile unwilling love to my desire.
There is not any fear in loving ways ;
Be comforted, thou restless little one.
Let me approach thee, and thy life shall find
Its music ; and a sudden land of flowers
Shall lift itself around thee, fleecy-deep,
And veiling heaven out in exuberant
Curtains of bloom.'

 'Divine one, thy child days
Are gone, their pretty echoes broken all ;
More is the music of the hours that grow,
Clothed with sweet sound and mellow chords of fire ;
The lyric words are older than the gods,
Coeval with the fruitful patient earth,
Mother of many children. O my nymph,
I dwelt alone in glory, crowned with light ;
For thee I have forgot my radiant throne.
The cloudy plains are weary to my feet,

The nectar cup is bitter to my mouth ;
A god, I languish, broken with desire,
A king, I pine, bound of a mightier one.
Veiling my golden brows in earthly gloom,
Here, as a mist, I wander all night long,
Until the dawning with a gush of fire
Make blow the little winds and shake the meres.'

‘MAGA CIRCE.’

A PICTURE AT ROME.

THIS is her island squared in cypress lines ;
With cedar ranks about her alley walks
Set frequent, and the faces of their boles
Are crimson deep as sunset stains of cloud.
The floor between them, rank and overgrown,
Is tangled with luxuriant heads of bloom
All in a mat together, mixed with grass.
There are the bells of some wide wine-deep flowers,
Great apple fruits and tawny orange globes ;
And bunchy cactus tipped in fire-bright buds,
Gray aloe spikes and heavy curling vines,
And speckled poison berries intertwined.

Her groves lead down upon the light free waves ;
Here foam-heads dance and ripple into sound.
The laughter of many birds is in her elms,
Jays, owls, sea-crows, larks, lapwings, nightingales,
As jumbled as the flowers beneath their notes.
The Isle-grove ends abruptly on the sea,
A stranded star-fish neighbours by the turf
Where the snail toils beneath his painted walls.
Small seaward gusts irresolute breathe near ;
And sweeter waftings, sent from middle brine,
Stir the deep grasses at her perfect feet,
Where Circe, shining down the gaudy flowers,
Leans centre-light of all this paradise.
One ankle gleams against the margin turf
Just beyond where the wave-teeth cease to bite.
And sea-pinks grow less rosy near her feet.

But this enchantress, island-queen, herself
Bears on her head a bright tire marvellous,
And for a girdle one of many dyes

Woven and traced with curious pattern-spells.
Her face is not at first so beautiful,
That one should say, 'Fear her, she will slay men
And draw them into deaths by her strange ways,
And some soft snare hid under all of her.'
We must consider well upon her face,
And then the silent beauty of it all,
Begins upon us, grows and greatens on,
Like sweet increasing music, chord on chord,
Till all our being falters overthrown ;
And she lures out our soul into her hands,
As faint and helpless as a newborn babe,
To have her way and will with all of it.

O, she, this Circe mage, is strange and great,
And deadlier than those terrible bright forms,
That beam out on us obviously divine,
And at a flash content us with their grace.
Her love eats deeper to the core of men,
Scathing and killing, fierce and unappeased ;

Until not only the divine in us,
But all the human also (which indeed
Are one tho' this less perfect) fade and change,
And fall corrupted into alien forms.
Till we resemble those strange-headed things
Herded away behind her island throne,
Chimeras, tiger-apes, and wolfish swine.

AN EXPOSTULATION.

O WEAKLING nation, brood of foolish hearts,
Sons of dismay, children of rebel seed,
Ye that sin meanly in a joyless sin,
Ye that seek after death without reward,
And go and hire yourselves to follow him,
Reaping your own destruction for ill wage—
The strong God, merciful in all his power,
Cries to this people thro' my feeble lips.

Shall my soul always wrestle with your sins ?
Are ye so mighty to despise my voice ?
What are ye then ? A little crumbled dust
Between my hands, an ash-cake in my palms.
Array me then your power, that I may smite ;
So mean ye are I will not lift an arm,
Yea, with the breathing of a little breath,

I will blot out your record from the earth ;
Shall the grain strive against the reaper's edge,
Shall the sheep bind the shepherd, shall the smoke
Throw down the altar ? Ah, my people, hear.
Shall some dim vapour of a shaken wind
Lift up herself in scorn against my seat ?
Shall rain-drops say, come let us beat his throne ?
When the great sea, strong as my light is strong,
Mother of many a shining river-head,
The great white water-garland of the world,
Is shaken if I call across her deeps.
She would remove beyond the day-spring gate
In trembling undulation at my voice.
She shakes this ocean I have made so strong,
Is this then righteous, that ye know no fear ?

Flee, crouch behind your gates ; creep under caves,
Escape, depart, be hidden, get you far ;
Lest I bend down my bow, and the dart leap
Hissing upon you brutish to obey,

Till ye be tamed with burning sores of death.

Ah, chosen people, once my strength and joy,
Have I not pleaded with your swerving feet ?
I do not love, ye vain ones, that ye die.
Your foolish blood is bitter in mine eyes.
Yet am I weary crying all day long,
What if I make an end and call no more,
And let the red grave reap you suddenly ?
Ye have not seen me in my battle might ;
No supplication longer will restore
That mild god, your old refuge and supreme
Munition ; when ye hold my easy laws,
Your path is pleasant underneath my hand,
Your soul is fed with dew. The old gray earth
Sleeps in content, hearing my spirit call,
' Be thou renewed.' To her my care is sweet,
And my word works upon her ; as some dawn,
When the strong seed of light outspreads its stem
And leafage in among heaven's darkened floor ;

Till there be no room vacant from the pure
Prevailing beams that touch the cloud to flower.
Ay, in such might my word hath wrought alone ;
A little spoken word, a thrust-out hand,
The moving of an eyelid can prevail
Beyond the violent deep or burning cloud.
Nay more, my thought is greater than your deed,
My silent purpose than your wrestling arms.
What if I will it, tho' my lips be mute,
The raining of my favour winnows down
The soft air radiant. Feather-light it falls,
Balm to the broken, to the wounded sleep,
To parched lips honey, to the hungry bread.
In all sweet ways upon the sorest hearts ;
Mighty indeed to heal being mine. The grain
Beaten about the field of many winds
Straightens again. From refuge creep the ewes
Bleating amid the vapour of the crags :
The doves begin a little in the rocks :
The vinedressers crawl out against the hills.

Why should ye disobey me any more ?
Ye are in no wise great to purchase death.
The kings of men indeed—such are ye none—
Great of estate, in treasure-towers display
Excelling tissues, silk, and purple spoil,
Gold, spices, precious vessels, cedar, gums.
They can command desire with such a store,
And purchase costly evil to their wills.
They barter to lean death insatiable
Their fat souls at some profit. Sin rewards
Their service duly for a waning day.
He sits and pipes them back lascivious tunes
To mock the senses with a dream of heaven.
The unfailing fountains of their garden leap,
When drought has blackened half the village mouths,
The spice-air thickens in their orange-boughs ;
And heavy scent of orchard terraces
Comes as the wind comes, with a swing of leaves.
It is a region sweet in air and sound ;
But, out beyond the cincture of his lawns,

And brazen portals firm as mountain face,
The pestilence is heavy on the land,
And the dead thicken in the silent streets.
And round the failing wells the dying crawl ;
And a strange haze, like lost low scraps of cloud,
Sickens their edges into poisoned hues,
And they float thick with swollen bandaged things.
And men who pass shudder and will taste none,
And no man reckons if he live the day.
* But in his garden lolls the bloated king,
And laughs a languid laugh, to see the slave
Curl her lithe limbs down fleecy coverlets,
And finger at the stringing of her lute,
Waiting upon his eye-lash, to command
Her lovely tones to tremble ; as she sets
Her sweet breath into song to make him joy.
How he is lord of earth and love besides ;
Absolute god ; to whom her nature flows
In adoration ; as some puny stream
Born in far hills throbs towards the amber gates,

Where sun and ocean mingle crowned in fire.
He is delighted in his days, for these
Few shadows of deliciousness ill-bought,
Some lying praises of a lute-girl's lay,
Some falser laughter, a brief purple state,
Fulness of bread, and plenitude of ease ;
And like a smoke he is done with, and put down.
He shall not cry loud in the grave, or moan
For that sweet pleasaunce where he feasted well.
But I will lay no hand to heave him out.
But thou art even vainer than this fool ;
Seeing that while he lived he took rare wine
In a large cup and yellow, with sweet lees ;
Time came a little season for his slave
To cram his senses full of spice, and meat,
And music, till he tumbled in his grave.
But thou wilt serve on death without a wage,
Since bitter is the best of thy day's fruit.
Thou art not mighty. Thou art storeless, cold,
Unroyal, hungry. Earth to thee is lean

And pastureless. How should'st thou not obey
My easier precept? Wilt thou leave so much,
To make thee serve me in a dainty heed?
But my reward is great in after-fruit,
And my delight is lovely as sweet rain;
My chosen never shall be trampled down;
I will reveal them hidden water-heads,
Fountains of moisture quiet in sweet grass,
And reeds that sound at season with the quail.
Cry out upon my glory and have rest;
Crowd to' my shadow, and feed full with ease.
Cry, oh, my children, and my shine shall break
Flower-wise from heaven. Am I, the great one, waned
To this exceeding weakness? Is my hand
Feeble to save, since ye refuse to call?
Can I not bring again the sweet old years?
I will restore the broken, and set straight
The failing knees. I will bring back your rest,
Ye bruised and forgotten ones of sin.
Ye shall emerge from hill-dens cavernous

Whereby ye made your harbour with the wolves,
Your bread wild berries, bitter herb your oil.
Ye shall have housing warm and store of beeves,
And comfortable prospect at your doors.
I will command the locust that he spare,
I will refrain the canker lest he spoil.
I will make heavy in its husk the ear,
So that it bend the straw-stalk under it.
Against the light cloud I will stand and say,
Render thy moisture, satisfy the land ;
So that my people dwell fulfilled with ease.
I will reward them, if they will obey ;
But if, with stubborn faces, they return
To surfeit on the savour of old sins ;
Lo, I predict of these fair things not one,
But for all feasting-houses emptiness,
Ash for choice raiment, wail for viol song,
Wormwood for wine, for all fine silver scum,
Darkness and wrath and burning and dismay.

X

THE KNIGHT IN THE WOOD.

THE thing itself was rough and crudely done,
Cut in coarse stone, spitefully placed aside
As merest lumber, where the light was worst
On a back staircase. Overlooked it lay
In a great Roman palace crammed with art.
It had no number in the list of gems,
Weeded away long since, pushed out and banished,
Before insipid Guidos over-sweet,
And Dolce's rose sensationalities,
And curly chirping angels spruce as birds.
And yet the motive of this thing ill-hewn
And hardly seen *did* touch me. O, indeed,

The skill-less hand that carved it had belonged
To a most yearning and bewildered heart,
There was such desolation in its work ;
And through its utter failure the thing spoke *
With more of human message, heart to heart,
Than all these faultless, smirking, skin-deep saints ;
In artificial troubles picturesque,
And martyred sweetly, not one curl awry—
Listen ; a clumsy knight who rode alone
Upon a stumbling jade in a great wood
Belated. The poor beast with head low-bowed
Snuffing the treacherous ground. The rider leant
Forward to sound the marish with his lance.
You saw the place was deadly ; that doomed pair,
The wretched rider and the hide-bound steed
Feared to advance, feared to return—That's all !

JOHN ANDERSON'S ANSWER.

I CANNOT kiss thee as I used to kiss ;
Time who is lord of love must answer this.
Shall I believe thine eyes are grown less sweet ?
Nay, but my life-blood fails on heavier feet.
Time goes, old girl, time goes.

I cannot hold as once I held thy hand ;
Youth is a tree whose leaves fall light as sand.
Hast thou known many trees that shed them so ?
Ay me, sweetheart, I know, ay me, I know.
Time goes, my bird, time goes.

I cannot love thee as I used to love.
Age comes, and little Love takes flight above.

If our eyes fail, have his the deeper glow ?
I do not know, sweetheart, I do not know.
Time goes, old girl, time goes.

Why, the gold cloud grows leaden, as the eve
Deepens, and one by one its glories leave.
And, if you press me, dear, why this is so,
That this is worth a tear is all I know.
Time flows and rows and goes.

In that old day the subtle child-god came ;
Meek were his eyelids, but his eyeballs flame,
With sandals of desire his light feet shod,
With eyes and breath of fire a perfect god
He rose, my girl, he rose.

He went, my girl, and raised your hand and sighed,
' Would that my spirit always could abide.'
And whispered ' Go your ways, and play your day,
Would I were god of time, but my brief sway
Is briefer than a rose.'

Old wife, old love, there is a something yet
That makes amends, tho' all the glory set ;
The after-love that holds thee trebly mine
Tho' thy lips fade, my dove, and we decline,
And time, dear heart, still goes.

REGRET.

IF in this church-yard's crowded round
The letters on this simple stone
Seem common tale of burial ground,
Why pause so long before this one,

Bearing, you see, a female name
And years that show she died when young?
A thousand grave-stones tell the same
In peace our rural vales among.

Shall I claim special emphasis
Of pain beyond my neighbour's share?
My love, and is it come to this,
Men think that I no longer care?

G

‘So fails,’ they sneer, ‘this noisy woe
That would reprove our calmer grief.
He made us sick with all the show
Of his despair. He must be chief,

‘And lord above all grief before ;
His finer feelings, sole of men,
Could wring out sorrow to the core :
Such ostentatious tears, and then,

‘He dries them soon enough ; behold,
He’s much as others ; only say
From dulness now his manner’s cold :
He always had a sullen way.

‘He’d surely wed, could one be found
To take her chance with him so sour,
But not a maid, thank God, all round
Would judge the risk half worth the dower.’

Ay me, to vex my soul with lies.

The fools may cackle as they need ;
I hold him most, whom such despise,
Whom least their sordid praises feed.

Thou seest clear at least, my own,
Thou knowest, is my sorrow done ?
So my thought reach thee near the throne
That lends his brightness to the sun.

My heart within me frets and burns
This trivial round of days to bear.
My spirit from old habit turns
To where thou wert ; a void is there.

I take my laugh and bear a hand
In what the busy neighbours strive ;
Ah, could they come to understand
The heart is dead, the man alive.

A dreamy life without a will
I move as friends would have me go ;
I hardly heed, if yonder hill
Be gentian-clad or crisp with snow.

Rock on thro' space, thou weary globe,
Let each month wake her sister flower ;
Night is around me like a robe :
The throstle's song is harsh and sour.

I brood thro' all the light, and wait
Thro' all the darkness : wait? for whom?
I watch for something sure as fate.
I hear its footsteps thro' the gloom.

I know it comes and it will come.
Ay me, why must I watch so long?
The slow clouds crumble dome on dome,
And change their colours like a song,

Note-changing ripples into new.

Would clouds dissolve and show thy face
In chasms of eternal blue,
Ringed with the radiant morning's grace.

Thy face I cannot call at will,
But casual eyes of mart and street
I can depict with faithful skill,
Tho' these I hardly know to greet.

As words lose meaning often said,
Confused thy gracious image lies
Too often dwelt upon. I fed
My thought too often on thine eyes.

I've dried my tears, as gossips say ;
And shall be merry then they know.
My trivial tears are done away,
Precursors to the deeper woe.

MACHIAVEL IN MINIMIS.

I TURN the puzzle over, side by side
Set all its myriad facets to the light,
State and re-state it. Still the clue eludes.
Who can work nature out in diagrams ?
Or cast the fluid essence volatile
Of human motive flawless into moulds
Of statist theory ? Clear flows the stuff,
Till meeting with a sand-grain all runs wrong,
Spoilt in an instant, ruined by a hair ;
And we bend grimly to our toil again.
There's my solution written clean and clear,
No letter wrong, not one erasure seen,

The periods flowing as a rill of oil.
Shut in my desk it seems a perfect thing :
Put it in action, and some wretched fly
Tangles himself against it for a whim,
And all goes out of gear. It worked so smooth
Till some fool-passion touched the intricate wheels
And wrecked itself and them. Man still eludes
Logic and computation like weak cloud.
He will not be consistent, this poor beast ;
And I complain, that on no certain plan
Will he ordain existence. Virtue's well,
And Vice affords some grist to nature's mill.
So, man, be good or evil once for all.
Each scheme of life presents peculiar charm.
But, being evil, why slide back to saint,
Or being saint, relapse to sinner's ways ?
That's what this fatuous human nature does.
Man, ever-veering, fails in either part ;
Makes quite a sorry milk-and-water fiend,
Or drapes himself in paltry angel plumes,

And snuffs for carrion in the nearest hedge.
Who can put rule to such a thing as he ?
Could I not master with an easy hand
A devil legion true to devil law,
Or sweet obedient seraph-birds of heaven ?
But this thing looking both ways, going none,
Remorseful in his murder, tyrannous
In his best loving ; false as hell to a wife,
And constant to a harlot as a dove.
Merry at church, and in a wine-vault sad,
How shall I build a science of his soul ?

There's one type here and there I understand.
Take this lean kneeling monk, who scores his knees
Into a gristle with the sharpest flints
Pegged close as mussel-bed between the tides,
Who gauges saintship by lean flesh and dirt.
And there's some burning purpose in that other,
Who takes and sucks the orange of all sin
Clean dry in spite of thunder, and makes mouths

At the big eyes of the indignant priests.
O, I could frame a science of the world
Time-proof and out of shot of accident,
If only and if always men as these
Were black and white about it ; but confound
These neutral grays unfit for heaven or hell.

Here am I, statist and philosopher,
Just paid enough to wrap my bones and feed.
Who pull the strings of this great booby duke,
Manage the nobles, give the mob their cue,
When they may roar for charters with success.
Rule this small realm by balancing the three
Against each other with a wary thumb,
Being an unseen providence almost
To all and each, but reaping thanks of none.
Thus in the game of government play men,
Like chess, except your pieces won't keep still,
Stir of themselves, if you but turn your head,
Will not be passive. Why should this pert knight

Move, no word given, within the castle's reach,
And suicidal, rush upon his doom?

He saw one yard around him in the smoke,
Having no glimpse how fared the outer fight,
Where the foe queen lay helpless 'twixt a pawn
And her poor king's exposure. Much he knew :
While the whole battle-plan beneath mine eyes
Lay mapped and meted like a pasture plain.

Or state my troubles in another view—

Mankind is here in that weak infant stage
When it just totters but can't go alone ;
Is fractious if you aid it, wails the more
If, when the stumble comes, your arm don't catch
And interpose at the instant. You look on,
Preaching of balance, how to plant the feet,
Till, using your tuition to escape,
Some weary hour souse goes the sullen child
Into the nearest horse-pond ; chokes and roars
To you, who pull it out and cleanse its rags,
And curse the pains you took to get it in ;

Since in its crawling state it always kept
A dry skin till you taught it.

A sweet life !

And sweetly grateful service, you may say ;
And surely sweet example they assume,
These many masters mine, to imitate
The license of the shoaling forest-flies ;
Who cloud your head, and with your moving move,
And madden you with droning undersong
And feeble sting. My legion rulers these ;
My Lord in chief another, that's the Duke,
Whom 'tis my gracious duty to direct
From a state-paper to a love-affair ;
That vacuous thing, arch-dotard of the herd,
That most uncertain blockhead, ' Charlemagne
In council and in bravery Roland.'
So ran the late address, a birthday thing,
Presented by the council of the town,
Phrased somewhat neatly. I composed it all ;
And taught them how to speak it end to end.

As, in a ducal and less flowing style,
I wrote the answer of our gracious Lord ;
Which in the reading he was pleased to change
To dismal nonsense. Well, that audience done,
The crassest alderman must pluck my robe,
Draws down a serious mouth and whispers me,
To this effect ; ‘ I meddle over-much,
Clerk as I am of no degree and mean,
Between the people and the awful throne ;
Let me beware.’ His neighbour caught the cry
To the same tune ; another civic light
Snorted approval, stared with oozy eyes
Glazed over with a weak malevolence ;
Essayed to speak, but only gurgles came
From that throat eloquent ; and all this coil
Arose, because one pushing alderman
Wished to intrude his daughter, Lammas last,
About the duchess as a tiring-wench.
And I, who read this daughter at a glance,
Brewer of mischief, in suave sort declined,

In our o'erstocked menagerie of cats,
To introduce another of the breed,
So promising already in the rough.
Well, to return, I listen, rub my hands ;
Bow to the burghers ; hope I know my place,
Smile as I watch them stumbling down the stairs,
Muse for a space. Another taps my sleeve,
The audience usher, the duke waits, I go,
Knowing the leader of his people sends
Most graciously intending, in his turn,
To wipe his sacred buskins for an hour
Upon the trivial carcase of his slave.
Which comes to pass exactly as I said ;
His Highness rates me with a heated face ;
The burghers' speech has rubbed him the wrong way,
Seems less effusive than last birthday's one,
When our grain crops were beaten less by scuds,
And native woollens beat the Flemish looms.
Then one seditious rumour frets his soul,
Was ever worthy ruler plagued as he ?

The thing was nothing, a mere *contretemps*,
About a damsel he had noticed once.
Such things will happen—noticed, mind, I say ;
No further. But thereon the silly child
Must choose to wail and moan about our streets,
And utter, Lord knows what, best left unsaid.
The weaker sort caught up her idle tale,
And spread it, till one trivial accident
Had made men's loyal feelings limp and lean.
The duke was pleased to vent all this on me,
Blameable somehow for his merry hours ;
I stood a-shiver, like a coatless man
Caught in a good ripe drench of harvest rain
Upon a treeless common. He stormed on
Merrily, till it ended ; all must end.
I stumble backwards from the inner shrine
Dazed with the thunder of this royal Jove.
Crossing the ante-room I'm caught again,
The Countess Emma wants a word with me,
Will take denial none. I needs must go ;

Because our duke esteems her ladyship,
Consults her much—of course on state affairs—
In short, you'd best be well with her just now.
Tho' perhaps a month or two shall change all that.
Well, there's a tedious tale of when and how,
Of ways and tears and means. These female scrapes
Disgust me most. They're so illogical.
I could instruct them, if they'd come to me,
How to be twice as bad at half the risk,
And still to sin with some consistency
About their scheme of sinning. As it seems,
Some distant cousin of her countess-ship,
The sex is immaterial to the tale—
Must have at any price relays of cash.
She tries her teasing ways upon the duke.
But his exchequer runs at grievous ebb ;
Until one certain evening, having dined,
More to be rid of her than anything,
He gave her, or allowed her to divest,
Certain crown-jewels that he happened to wear.

The case lay sweetly in a nutshell thus.
No goldsmith in this loyal burgh would buy ;
He dared not melt and could not sell the gear.
Besides his Highness might not well recall
The details of their giving : who would deal
In wares that savoured of the axe and cord ?
One thing was certain. Money must be found.
And blood is much, tho' distant be the kin.
She ends in weeping as a thing of course.
Then in one instant I discern my way.
This trash must fall or my court days are done.
This tangle must disroot herself or me.
Hail ! thou great glow of conflict, action hail !
My blood warms for the first time in the day.
Here is a thing to do, a road to tread,
As clear as noon-light. Exquisite and clean
This action with a precipice all round
But one way. Forward in sweet confidence !
The doubts that vex our science are as dead
As Saint Paul's viper.

I don't push her out
Of any malice, mind. She is as well
As she will be who treads into her shoes.
But she has woven a knot I dare not break ;
Therefore I know she will hate me, plan my fall ;
So my resolve is taken, I decline
To intermeddle with her jewel sales.
She weeps, entreats, and threatens finally,
As I expected. Then I speak indeed
My word of power and quell her at one blow
Within an hour his Highness must be taught
Who battens on the jewels of his crown.
As for herself, all harvest hence is spoiled.
Let her pack up her bundles and begone,
A cheated jealous Jove is apt to flash
In formidable ire, unmerciful.
Might it not peril her smooth neck to stay ?
And one hour's law I even gave her then,
Gave her this space to outwit me, if she dared
Being curious on the surmise, if she could

H

Summon the needful courage. I believe,
I love the sciences political
Beyond my personal danger. Not at all ;
She is a low poor creature, fierce enough
With the game hers, but prostrate at a blow.
She flies. We hang the cousin out of hand ;
And, out of sheer compassion, I procure
A pension for her. Tho' the duke storms out,
That I am false to ask it for the jade,
But finally concedes it. Off she goes
To her castle in the vineyards ; where she milks
Two cows and goes to chapel twice a day,
And takes her serving-maids on stipulation
That they should see no sweethearts. R. I. P.,
As they say in the grave-yards.

To my task,
I am grown garrulous indeed to-night.
I think at seasons I am ageing fast.
What ! midnight chimes, and with the morning comes
The knavish envoy of the neighbour throne.

And I must have my wits in sweetest gear ;
His cormorant kingdom snatches at our land,
And preys upon our marches half-way round,
Would quarrel on a nutshell if she could.
She is strong and we are crafty. Let her come ;
I can subdue her in a paper war
And drive her from the field with argument.
Suppose it comes to fighting. Well, that goes
Beyond my province. I've philosophy
To face the issue ; cosmopolitan,
I have no land, my science is the world.

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN.

THE warrior after years of war
Leant in a doorway, bent and gray.
He dared not enter, for he saw
Her children at their noisy play.

'Here, trembling at the love-word both,
Her first kiss touched me, ripe as May.
We plighted here eternal troth
That dawn of death I rode away.'

'A secret, sister, hear and keep.'
The boy within began to say,
'I know what made our mother weep
To watch our sport the other day.'

'She said, "Sweet death, be swift to me.

My lord's love died this many a day."

Guess, who this cruel lord can be—'

The warrior sighed, and moved away.

THE SPEAR-HEAD.

IN a field on a hill pacing alone,
Near a gray stone-wall and peat-plash of rushes.
Something one mound means, the field's only one,
Where the sour autumn wind saddens and hushes.

When the wind pauses the weird of the place
Greatens in stillness ; low whispers in silence
Grow with strange faces ; Alas, not his face ;
And the sound comes of a river round islands.

Hearken ! I fancy a trample of steeds.
See, they meet with a clash ; lances are broken.
One steed goes riderless : one rider bleeds :
Has he not brave rippled hair for a token ?

Soon fades the vision. I'm pacing there still ;
Musing, with wraiths of old anguish surrounded.
Is that a raven's cry half down the hill ?
Why must it sound like a groan of the wounded ?

But where he fell a curse rests. It grows bald ;
Why will no countryman climb up and sow it ?
Seen from the valley, a broken brown scald,
Even the school-children point at and know it.

Has the gray hill-gloom infected its grass,
Since but a crow or two cares to sail thither ?
Shrubs in that place have arrived at a pass
When it seems worse to exist than to wither.

There's mat-grass anyhow ; pale, dry as hay.
Why should I search every tussock twice over ?
I had gone seeking a year and a day,
When at length what do you think I discover ?

Treasure ! I hurried it home to my nest.

Wore my lips out on it till I was wearied.

See, like a jewel, it hangs in my breast,

Tho' it be only a broken-off spear-head.

A LAMENT.

YE glades within whose shade the rose
Is withered, where no dews may fall.
Ye lulling winds that love repose
When cloud comes pausing over all.

The wave is hush'd upon the sands,
Still is the wave-bird on her nest.
And calm the gleaming sunset-bands
Reveal their islands in the west.

Soon will the ripple move again,
Soon every nest outpour its song ;
Soon in new glory argent rain
Will dance its flakes the blue along.

Long ere my heart have light again,
Long ere my breast be full of song.
For till the earth reveal her slain,
The night-cloud on my life is strong.

MUTATION.

IF but a little while the flowers are new
Till broken over-ripenly with great dew,
Shall Love remain untarnished till his close,
Clear in his depth, heart-perfect like a rose ?

Yet, O my love, one little changeable year
O'er Amor's laughing eyes will render sere
The pretty petals, and uncrimson soon
The brave new posies garlanded in June.

If I have led thee in sweet way of flowers,
If we have heard the dove's voice answer ours,
Where the sharp woods grew mellow nearer noon,
Shall love endure more than the cuckoo's tune ?

If I have pastured at thy lips as well
As the bee trembles at the asphodel,
Are their ripe bloom and tender incense breath
Secure alone from stain of dust and death ?

Love in his sheaf has bound us breast to breast,
Why reason sourly at his harvest feast ;
Or seek for ashes under every rose
That cinctures round his beaming tresses close ?

And yet, dear heart, this phantom clothed in fear,
Makes not in dearness thee one shade less dear ;
And I will hunger for more love indeed,
If love be briefer than a wayside weed.

I will not leave my ruler, tho' his reign
Change as a rose or like a crescent wane.
What answer shall we render, sweet, to these
Who hate our Lord, because his rule shall cease ?

Say, with thy sweet lip rested under mine,
‘Lord of an hour, thou only art divine.’
Sing, while I feel the perfume of thy breath,
‘Love is eternal and more strong than death.’

FREEDOM OR FETTERS?

COME, let us leave, have no smooth words but go ;
Better break off at once than palter so.
Have out the ending, cloud in idle tears.
Freedom outweighs regret of altered years
Gone by and done.

Review the lovely dream we thought to reach ;
The blind desire that held us each to each ;
Count out in calmness all the loss and gain ;
And say, when all is done, could we remain
Heart-bound as one ?

Peace is a nobler thing than loving thee,
More than love's sweet is to be trouble-free.

We shall not better our old loving ways,
And the chain galled us in those half-sweet days
Though silken fine.

Content thee and depart. Can I control
The lapsing month or bind the season's roll?
Can I command that change shall flee away?
Will Fate, who rules the gods, hear what I say?
Is all power mine?

You give me your old smiling as I speak ;
You whisper, I was vain if you were weak.
Ah, child, refrain to portion each his blame ;
Is it delight to weigh how each fault came?
Ah, who shall tell ?

Still, though I be most hungry to begone,
Weary of all things, asking peace alone ;
Yet, if you smile me that old smile again,
My soul will grow a weakling, and refrain
To say farewell.

ACQUIESCENCE.

MAN, leave the gods their way.
Let them, O man, prevail :
Mighty and more than thou,
How should their anger fail ?
Why settest thou thy baby palms
To wrestle down the thews that may not tire ?
Why wilt thou vex thyself to be as they,
Weakling of sorrow and sleep ?
Why wilt thou thrust about the world for peace ?
God is at peace alone.
Take from their careless hands
The morsels of their pity as they fall :
Take from their scornful brows
The curse, and call them just.

Nay, thou art foolish to have any pride :
They use thee as they choose.
Count every happy dream
As stolen from the envy of their power.
Turn at the last to slumber, if no great woe
Hath taken thee, secure,
That under the warm earth to vex thy sleep
Their hands can never come.

A HEATHEN TO HIS IDOL.

IN TIME OF PEACE.

By the gold bosses drilled in thy feet,
By the stones shedding flame at thine eyes,
By the canopied west of thy seat,
By the blood, by the censer,—arise !

Ah, lord, thou art not as the rest,
Poor idols, that falter at need :
Thou art cased up in gold to each breast
Strung over with jewel and bead.

Gods needy our neighbours obey,
Lean idols, whose altars are bare :
Their faces are rusted and gray,
The spider weaves over their hair.

They are needy, their brows gather gloom :

They abide in the breath of reproof,
Under fanes without colour or room,
Where the rain-drop eats into the roof.

They are cold in unlovely abodes.

They are feeble and molten with fear.
They pine for the clashing of odes.
They faint for the blood of the steer.

They dwell in dim houses and pine.

Their singers are weary to come.
The lamp flickers out in their shrine.
Their wizards are sleepy and dumb.

Thou art scanted in nought for a god.

We tend thee a house that is sweet.
Thou hast anklet and armlet, and shod
With ivory sandals thy feet.

Thy bountiful hair like a fleece,
 Outflows by a fathom thy chair.
O Idol, O god, let thy peace
 Descend as a rain that is fair.

O wonderful image we serve,
 Uphold in thy counsel our seat ;
Establish, redeemer, preserve ;
 Not in vain let us slay thee thy meat.

We have given thee cymbal and song,
 Much praising with censer and knee,
Such scent of sweet blood for so long,
 Shall no reward follow from thee ?

We give, and our neighbour repays ;
 We lend, he restores us our loan.
Are men to be fair in their ways,
 And gods to deal falsely alone ?

Wilt thou snuff at the fat of our beeves,
And show us no token of good ?
Is recompense lighter than leaves ?
Is gratitude thinner than blood ?

Wilt thou listen the drone of our hymn,
And glaze thy dull orbs to a stare ?
Wilt thou bring us dark days for a whim,
And send us as handmaid despair ?

We have done thee due worship indeed.
We have sown : is no reaping to come ?
We have crawled in thy courts for our need :
We have prayed, who had better been dumb.

We have wrestled in praise. Were it worse
To have made thee lewd mock with light words,
To have haled down thy niche with a curse,
And twisted thy feet into cords ?

Ah Lord, will one kneeler remain
If worship and cursing are one?
If chaff be accounted as grain,
In the silence where all things are done?

If record be lost in the tomb;
If, after the failing of breath,
One measure, one silence, one doom,
Be borne in the strong hands of death?

If in that dim storehouse of years,
Who shall love as a lover? Who weep?
Be thy seed good or evil, it bears
One fruit in the fallows of sleep.

If life, and not death, O divine,
Thou wilt bring us with choiceness of days,
We will light thee great lamps at thy shrine
And burn thee huge beeves in thy praise.

A HEATHEN TO HIS IDOL.

IN TIME OF WAR.

AT our gates is the stranger arrayed,
And the edge of the spoiler is strong ;
If thou save not as dead we are made,
Who give thee no worship or song.

Before them the harvest is flame,
Behind them its ashes are gray.
Their lords are of terrible name,
Their arrows of resolute way.

Thou art mighty, then save. Thou art great,
Then shred me this people like sand.
Reach down thro' the darkness of fate,
Rise up with reward in thy hand.

Who knows what disdain they have done?

How they came with a blast, with a cry,
To encamp in the grove of the sun,
To drink at the waters thereby?

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How they gibed as they tightened the girth,
How they scoffed as they hammered the chain?
They are clothed in an insolent mirth;
Thou shalt wipe them away like a stain.

By his tent at the dawning always
The lute-girls assemble, and sing
This pæan of blasphemous praise
To awaken their captain and king.

Lithe maidens, the flower of the spoil,
They twitter like cranes in the cool;
Their shoulders are softer than oil,
Their tresses are closer than wool.

They are cunning to modulate song ;
They are trained in the dance from the teat.
They whirl and are wafted along
On nimble and rhythmical feet.

They are tired with gold orbs to their hair.
Their robe edges shine with device.
Their raiment is clearer than air.
In each ear is an earring of price.

‘ We will make thee thy throne as the sun,
Thy seed as the infinite stars.
In glory as thou hast begun,
Shall endure the swift path of thy wars.

‘ Who shall faint with thy voice in his ear,
Who refrain with thy word to arise ?
Thou hast shaken a realm with thy spear,
And scattered a host with thine eyes.

‘ They prevailed over all men but ours ;
Proud were they of face, yet are slain.
They fenced out their inland with towers,
And strengthened the rims of their main.

‘ By the chosen of waves in their sight,
They sought them dry places to dwell.
They burnished the gates of their might,
With iron they girded them well.

‘ Their turrets were crimson afar,
As blood in the way of the sun.
On the crest of their temples a star
Came burning ere day was begun.

‘ They scoffed in their city of light.
They laughed to their idol at ease.
“ Thou hast bound away death from our sight,
Thou hast crowned us with glory and ease.

“Thou hast filled us with meat to the lips.
Our soul is thine own and secure.
Thou rulest the waves to our ships.
Thou heedest our name shall endure.”

‘So cried they, but he of their trust
Was feeble to turn thee away.
Thou hast broken their root into dust,
And trodden their branch down as clay.

‘He sold them their god to a snare.
And now thy war reaches to these,
Who clasp round their Dagon in prayer,
Natheless thou shalt bruise them with ease.

‘The hoarfrost is keen on the fold.
The furrows are crisp in their clay.
The winds are at peace in the cold
Until the uprising be gray.

‘ In slumber’s deep toils thou art blest ;
 Thou art folded and clothed in its grace.
How firm is the strength of thy rest,
 How grand the repose in thy face.

‘ What shadows portentous of fight,
 What hurling of foes from the steep,
What fragments, O giant, of night,
 Pass over thy spirit asleep ?

‘ Dost thou draw back thy shaft to its head,
 Dost thou crash to the charge in thy car,
Dost thou wade in a phalanx of dead,
 Dost thou shout in the trample of war ?

‘ O mighty, the dawning is near.
 Arise to thy glory and reap.
This people shall prove when they hear
 One blast of thine onset like sheep.

‘Ascend in thy raiment of might,
Their battlements melt at thy word.
Arise in thy worship and smite.
Destroy with one sweep of thy sword !’

To such strain they have chaunted their hate.
Ah, Lord, their lewd boasting reprove.
Keep ward at thy treasury gate.
Shall a weakling thy godhead remove ?

Nay, ruler and refuge, contrive,
A network of snares to their feet :
Entangle them. Save us alive.
Rain on them thy curses as sleet.

Afflict them with trouble of blood.
Consume them in violent ways.
Let pain be their portion for good.
Exchange for amazement their praise.

Let them parch with no river in sight ;

Let them march in a sun-blaze on sands ;

Let no dew-fall refresh them at night,

Let them wake, weak as sheep, in our hands ;

That their bleeding may redden our rills ;

That no dust of their foot-print remain ;

For they boasted, their god of the hills

Could vanquish our god of the plain.

THE STRANGE PARABLE.*

I THINK it left me when the sun was great.
I cannot tell the very point of time
When the cure wrought and I was free of this.
What drove it from me less and least I know.
Was it some word compelling from without,
Some royal accent potent to expel
This tribe of thing? It rent my soul, and fled,
Upon the waste wind, down the void. Who knows?
Let me consider, I had no pain then.
Only a kind of echo-pain remained.
And yet my soul ached with the loss of this,
My old abhorrence. It had wrought its roots

* St Luke xi. 24.

And worked its fibres round my nature so,
That I was lost without the thing I loathed ;
Painless, I seemed to hanker for old pain ;
To crave a presence necessary long
Thro' custom, rather than that new unrest
Which had replaced the banished agony.

Well, it was gone at last and plucked away.
The day it went resembled other days
So much. That latest conflict with the thing
Was so like others, where I always sank
Worsted. I thought as little it would go,
As that the sun would blacken his round orb.
I had grown feebler every day with it,
Cared, strove, and hated less, when like a clap
My soul was empty and the spirit gone.

Strangely I rose, felt myself sound and free,
But so belated ; as a man that dreams,
And knows that he is dreaming in a land

Of phantoms, and he thinks ; ' my dream must break
This moment or the next. I will lie still
And only watch. All here is smoke, and dream.'
So nature seemed a filmy veil of sleep,
The hills delusion, the firm fields as mist,
The cloud-cones vapour, mirage the bright woods.
The languor and the vacancy of change
Replaced the antagonistic element,
That gave a substance to my life erewhile,
And stung my native energies from sleep,
To war against this noxious demon's way
And push of still encroaching filaments.
All this indeed had found most sudden end.
The ferment as by miracle withdrew.
The tyranny was gone and left no wound.
The agony's vibration smoothed itself
To apathetic calm. And I remained
A painless naked thing without a soul.

Then I fared forth alone beneath the skies

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Without a will to guide me on my way,
In automatic motion like a drift ;
Or as a feather teased by some side-breeze
Athwart the master-current of the wind.
So nerveless and chaotic was my life.

My stagnant heart was empty save of fear.
A little eddying influx strangely stirred
Of barren dread beneath my barren heart.
O, but indeed this thing is pitiful,
When fear, in dearth of any purpose, rules ;
When the man, wretched beyond wretchedness,
Has still the primal instinct left of fear ;
Why should he fear, poor brute ? yet he fears still.
And this ignoble thing usurps the seat
Of purpose, and her vacant function fills,
And, save one dreamy fear, the man is nought.

After this fashion I fared aimless then ;
The sting that stood for purpose drove me on.

I wound along the roots of battered crags,
Arid as death ; and jumbled as a dream
Of ruin driving thro' a sick man's brain,
Who doubts and wearies on his fevered bed.
Then, as I clomb, rose yawning heights, abrupt,
Broken in flanks and ledges of great flags,
Immeasurable levels of smooth death ;
Tilted in pinnacles among the clouds,
Where the hill-raven faltered in the mist.
My mood was calmer in these solitudes,
I loathed to look upon the valley world,
Fat, with slow smoke, gray crowded homes, and squares
Of meadow, rank with juicy undermath,
And languid cropping kine dwarfed into bees ;
And the faint sprinkle of the water-wheels,
And each mill-torrent's shudder-gleam below.
Weary was I of all my fellows' ways ;
And lonely on the summits I was best.
Sometimes a peat-tarn capped the giant chain ;
A waste of ice, pale grass, and sodden sedge

And rotten fangs of rush ; whose trembling floor
Festered in moss, and darkened to decay.
Yet here I shuddered, as the star-time came,
To see the evil spirits of the fen
Trimming their lamps to lure me. And I sighed,
Knowing how fiends had marred the under vales,
To find new demons herded in the snows
Up in the eternal solitudes of God.
Therefore I wandered on, and still no peace :
And still I paced the uplands dry and drear.
And still the curse stung burning at my heart.

Then to myself I spake and spake with heed,—
The isolation and the restless feet
Of Cain are mine for always. Shall I choose
To roam for ever, with no living voice
Save mine own sighing, hear no word of love ?
Love, tho' a lie on lying lips, still sweet—
To wander till God blind me and I cease.
This is the desolation of the grave.

My pain erewhile to this was almost peace.
Is my gloom shaken with one rift of morn,
Is my verge radiant with one hint of sun?
Is this a phantom or a wreath of cloud
Eyed like a death, that beckons as I move?

And I with heedful steps devised return ;
My slow blood sickened in the weary ways ;
And all the evil I had ever done
Came crowding on me in slow loathsome shapes,
Saying, behold thy deed, changed, thy deed still,
In its corruption. 'Twas a merry deed
In thine old careless season. Mark it now ;
For time is great to find things in their truth,
And this was foul beneath its shining hide
In those days even ; but the taint has spread
And bloated it and shown the world its core.
And then came others, reaching out foul hands,
Distorted from young faces I had known,
Until I fled along the barren hills

And prayed to find death with a bitter prayer :

I loathed myself too greatly to endure

The hateful and irrevocable past.

What then sustained me through ? No hand of heaven.

No death sat waiting by the granite slab,

Or in the cracks of that dread violet lake

Frozen and fast since God created snow.

The greedy chasm refused me : at my tread

The snows yelled downwards, loosened ere my feet

Had made two onward steps. The crazy shales

Withheld me by an inch of crumbling ledge

From the abysmal silence leagues below.

At last the plain, O God : the bitter heights

Are whistling long behind. This rooted flower

Comes on me like the voices of my friends.

There is my place, last of the level plain :

The mist had masked it wholly, yet I know

The faintest border of the filmy wall,

And nearer, nearer drawn, my weary feet
Pause on the empty precinct of my race.

Ay me, returning. This is no return.
The core of desolation, where no rest
Shall come for ever, or one eyelid fall
In that sweet pure oblivion of the just.
Empty and swept and garnished tho' it be,
This is no home, but some sepulchral den
Set round with urn and ashes of the dead ;
Death breathes about its chambers like a blight,
The hearth is darkened with a phantom curse ;
I think no child will play there any more,
And I am lonelier here than on the void.

So went I forth, and took unto my need
Seven former comrades in the naked walls ;
They came and dwelt there, souls that mock the light,
And banter with the melancholy time,
Unheeding the to-morrow ; drowning sense

And foresight down ; contented to maintain
A grim carousal with a staring death,
And imminent destruction, in an hour
Ready to touch the cup and put away
From all pale lips for ever lust of wine.
Therefore the drift and end I do not know ;
Only this thing is certain in my soul,
That man with men must change his words or die.
And this I hold, man lonely is not man,
Dowered with the curse and need of social bond,
And leavened by his fellows into sin,
Because he cannot take his path alone.
The fretful ache of living goads him on.
Tho' he pry vainly thro' the secret doors
Of future, only gloom and cloud within
Are seen for answer ; joy before his feet
Fades, and sweet rest retires in rainbow foam ;
Perilous instincts lure him and mislead.
Tho' for a season he may conquer down
And put to flight the traitor legion well,

Yet with to-morrow's light they will return ;
And if he yield, relapsing to their rule,
Relapse is worse perdition to the man,
Than to have never left his sin at all.
Ay me, mysterious doom ; what help is mine ?

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

WE will lament the beautiful Adonis !
The sleepy clouds are lull'd in all their trails.
The water-heads are weary for the rain.
The branchy volumes of the clouded pines,
Like drooping banners, in excess of noon
Languish beneath the forehead of the sun :
Nor dares one gale to breathe, one ivy-leaf
To flicker on its strings about the boles.

Lament Adonis here in dead-ripe noon ;
Weep for her weeping, Queen of love and dream,
Disconsolate, love's ruler love-bereaved :
Where is thy godhead fallen, what avail
To throne it on the clouds yet lose thy joy ?

Couldst thou not hold Adonis on thy lips
Eternally, and scorn the ebbing years ?
This, this were meed of immortality,
To wear thy stately love secure and fair
Of rainy eyes : now shalt thou ne'er resume,
Enamoured Queen, thy shelter at his heart :
His arms no longer Aphrodite's nest.

Kneel then, and weep with her and weep with her.
It is not meet that pure cheek's crimsoning,
It is not fate those bloom-ripe limbs endure
The stain of thick corruption and the rule
Of common natures : Queen, possess thy power,
Raise him beyond the region of the sun ;
There cherish back the heavy eyes to blend
With that full morning of the ageless gods :
Watch him to life in bloomy asphodel,
Dissolve thy soul on his reviving lips.

In vain, 'tis idle dreaming this shall be.

In vain, ye maidens, this our sister toil
To scatter posies on his sacred sleep
With dole for him that was so beautiful :
He shall not wake from that lethean dream :
He shall not move for her immortal smile,
Nor hear the busy kisses at his cheek :
She ceases and she sobs upon her hands :
Come, let us weep with her and weep with her.

Smother his head with roses as he lies.
The day may draw the sacred twilight down :
The dew-lights on the grasses and the leaves
May speck the woods, as night the sky, with stars ;
The sun-down gale shall not, because we weep,
Forego his perfume, or night's bird her song.
Nature is greater than the grief of gods,
And Pan prevails, while dynasties in heaven
Rule out their little eons and resign
The thunder and the throne to younger hands.
He is the rock, but these the rounding waves.

Lament not, Queen of love, lament no more :
Nature and love alone are ageless powers ;
Thy queendom, Aphrodite, shall not fail.
The reign of might shall fail, the wisdom fail
That wrought out heavenly thrones : the weary clouds
Shall not sustain them longer : only love
And nature are immortal. Nature sealed
Adonis' eyes : the kindly hand forgave
The creeping years that held Tithonus old
Before the smiles that loved and saw him fade.

Have comfort ; and our homeward choir shall hymn
Thy godhead thro' the cedarn labyrinths,
Till they emerge upon the flushing sheet
Of sunset : on those waters many an isle
And cape and sacred mountain ripe with eve,
Cherish thy myrtle in delicious groves :
Infinite worship at this hour is thine.
They name thee Aphrodite, and the name
Blends with the incense towards the crimson cloud.

NIMROD.

Vedea Nembrotte appié del gran lavoro
 Quasi smarrito, et riguardar le genti
 Che in Sennaar con lui suberbi foro.

DANTE.

TOWARDS thy great clouds I reach my arms and cry,
 Confounded yet unconquered, if my power
 Could rend thee down, thou tyrant, from thy seat,
 Then would I barter twenty million years
 Of agonies, if at the last revenge
 Would crown me lord and master for a day.

Ye hireling nations melting at his hand
 Across the plain, who is your king but I?
 Who made you one and held you by the bond
 Of kingship, till the world had never seen

Your like for strength and empire, firm as gods ?
Were ye not strays upon the earth before ?
Weak as the puny rillets of the hill,
I rolled you into one imperial stream,
Grinding the mountains where ye chose to tread,
Not to be turned aside, more strong than they.
Together we were masters of the earth,
Divided ye were nothing, this ye knew ;
And he the tyrant knew it as his throne
Trembled beneath him ; then we journeyed on
And found this Shinar level as a sea,
Perpetual plain, and the low clouds came down
And touched the verge wherever we beheld.
I looked, and in my wake there journeyed on
The leagues of nations lessening o'er the waste
In coils of distance : I was king of these,
And at one spoken word their strength was mine.
There came a mighty thought upon my brain :
I knew that it was greater than myself
And quailed in joy before it, as it said,

Monarch of nations, thou hast conquered much
And always: there is nothing for thy sword ;
And it is puny praise to conquer men,
And stale endeavour : look upon the clouds,
They are not hung so high above thy head
As is the length of nations in thy wake :
Reach them and find at last an equal foe :
Reach them, resistless king, and war with gods,
That tremble now to think thou hast divined
How very great thou art, and weak are they.

I paused, and made the mighty thought a deed.
The nations came around me, and a shout
Of myriads hailed me God in my device.
And straight they went about it, mad with zeal.
The stiff blue clay lay ready at their hand ;
It seemed that nature owned her future Lord,
And brought the humble tribute of her earth
To build his throne, and laid it at his feet.
Eager they dug and baked the moulded marl ;

And all the plain lay like a heaven of stars
With frequent kiln at midnight, and by day
An under-heaven of blue and crisping cloud.
And the tower rose : the masons at its height
Could see the ocean now that we had left
A year behind us : ever at its base
The thousand-throated labour like a sea
Continually murmured : tier on tier
It darkened heaven, a monster in the sand,
And height succeeded height and pause was none :
Until its summits entered in the zones
Of cloud, and these about it clave all day
As on some giant peak untrod of man.
And the cloud made the tiers above itself
Seem more stupendous, and yet pause was none.
And now I thought, this wish is in my hand,
And at the base I held my men of war
In harness for encounter, to ascend
When the word came that heaven was scaled at last :
For now the cloud was permanent, and still

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The men built in it, hoping to emerge
Up thro' the rack upon the floor of heaven.

And still they built : and mad in our desire
We waited : slowly height on height it drew :
' An hour and we attain it.' Sudden light
Brake from above, ' Ye armies, heaven is won :
I lead you, come.' A roar behind me came,
As if against the land I led the sea :
And now I set my foot upon the stair—
When darkness drave in on my brain—I fell.

There as I lay confounded, like a child
That cannot move his limbs ; it seemed there grew
Enormous light out up above the cloud :
And smote the cloudy bastions, like a sun
Rending the mists, to put them at a sweep
From some long coast for ever : light of light
Glowed in the core of vapour, writhing it :
The blue haze crushed and shuddered as it came :

Whereon a voice to hear as terrible,
As, to behold, that radiance, throb by throb,
Dealt out its language larger than the sense
Of man receives in meanings on his brain.

Dead by the courses of their bricks they lay
The builders : one escaping down the stair
Spake idiot-like with charr'd distorted face,
And gibbered out a language of the dead.
And, as he spake, confusion seemed to spread
Upon our tongues who heard him. Horrid fear
Supplanted man's familiar eloquence
To jargon viler than a drunkard's song.
And I, altho' the god-voice and the light
Dazed me, arose, and cried to rally them,
' Be not afraid, this terror is not long :
If we possess our souls in such deep fear,
Then are we masters of these gods that know
No further torment for us : heaven is ours :
More great for this repulse I lead you on.'

They heard a sound of language at my lips :
They knew my tone, the gesture of command :
Then for a moment instinct, lord of fear,
Rallied their ranks behind me : not for long :
I was to these a babbler as the rest :
Their fellow's language on their ear became
Ineffable confusion, idiot sound.
They bore it but an instant and they fled :
They turned their eyes to all the winds of heaven,
And trod each other in their panic down :
And melted thro' the broad earth every way
In mad divergence, to escape alone
The mighty horror of the place. They left
The tower of their confusion, as one great
Unfinished protest of the toil of men
Against the lazy tyrants of the sky.
They fled : I raised my reeling blinded eyes,
Against the mocking clouds my hands I spread,
And cursed my birth, for on the Shinar plain,
Monarch of nations, lo, I stand alone.

ZEUS.

Who hath revealed his name,
Father of clouds, eternal as death is,
Who, ere the mountains came,
Sat in the morning light and had no care,
Great and austerely fair?
Under his feet the dew and spice of dawn
And little wells arose :
Murmur and supplication, laugh and prayer,
Came up like vapour to his footstool there :
And the faint pulse of distant throbbing woe
Rose as an echo very far below,
A moan the wind beats back, a sound that cannot grow.

He will not comfort any in his bliss,

To whom the treasures of the isles belong ;
Wilt thou draw down his feet with sacrifice,
Or lure his meteor presence with a song ?
Put by thy hymn and weep thy weeping, he is strong.
He is so strong, desire of him no aid.
Melt out the rocks with weeping at thy harm,
Thou shalt not make him as a man afraid,
Or overcome the shadow of his calm.
His brother gods that feast up there with him
Are bowed before him ere they touch the cup.
His presence makes their lesser glories dim,
And underneath his throne earth's wail comes up.
And now men praise him that he is so great,
And now they curse him that he lets them die,
And now some blessing feign, dissembling hate.
But one and all he lets their wail go by.
And now he slumbers on the tinted cloud,
While sick on earth the feeble nations fear
With eyes that fail and forehead earthward bowed,
Zeus, if thy name be Zeus, waken and hear.'

Descend and break the mountains, if thou hearest,
Awake, arise, and smite the secret seas.
Put on that strength of panoply thou wearest
When thou dost rise to prosper thy decrees.
Say to the deep, 'refrain thy ocean roaring ;'
Command the darkened places of the wind.
Bid thou the cloud dissolve her stately soaring ;
Speak to the tempest, 'flee thou like a hind :'
Bind up in vapour thy strong golden light.
Make pale the mild uprisings of the stars.
Scatter in weeping the broad earth's delight ;
Assume thy vengeance, thou of many wars.
O tried and terrible, resume thy sword,
Mighty in visitation, prove thy spear,
Lay to thine hand to justify thy word,
Zeus, if thy name be Zeus, waken and hear.

Ah, lord, ah, strong and sudden god, whose feet
Rest on the throb of all created pain,
Thou feelest thy dominion is so sweet,

Thou wilt not loose one rivet of our chain :
Thou wilt not say, ' Arise, and taste again
Love and the genial hour,
Where no cloud came :
Clothe back upon thy darling's cheek its flower,
And fear no blame.
Was she not wholly sweet and bound to thee
With innocent joy?
But this I did destroy
By the great might and scathe of my decree ;
Worm, what is this to me,
If time flowed sweetly once and now is ended ?
Before thou knewest I was great,
Thy lips my ways commended,
When thou in old estate
Wentest so light of dream,
With love that nature gave,
To find a sister in each wave,
A brother in the flower,
And some old blind mild god thy father of the hour.'

Thou art not mild, mysterious ! and thine eyes
Reach as the lightning reaches, and thy hands
Smite down the old perfections of the earth,
That came with blind old Saturn's dead commands,
And totter with his fall. The new god stands
Supreme, altho' his royal robe is wet
With his sire's blood ; and in his ears as yet
There waileth on a father's agony,
And yet he falters nothing : and shall we,
Seeing he has no mercy, have any fears ?
Nay, rather crave his thunder, if he hears
And is not drowsy with his long revenge.

Who shall ascend unto thine iron eyes,
Who shall make moan or prayer that may prevail ?
For thou art satiate with so many sighs
I do not think, O Zeus, thou wilt arise,
Fed with delight and all sweet dream and thought,
Thou wilt not rise supreme
In thy beatitude ;

For fleeting love is nought,
And human gratitude
In thy cold splendid cloud, must tremble to intrude.

Let us go up and look him in the face,
We are but as he made us ; the disgrace
Of this, our imperfection, is his own.
And unabashed in that fierce glare and blaze,
Front him and say,
' We come not to atone,
To cringe and moan :
God, vindicate thy way.
Erase the staining sorrow we have known,
Thou, whom ill things obey ;
And give our clay
Some master bliss imperial as thine own :
Or wipe us quite away,
Far from the ray of thine eternal throne.
Dream not, we love this sorrow of our breath,
Hope not, we wince or palpitate at death ;

Slay us, for thine is nature and thy slave :
Draw down her clouds to be our sacrifice,
And heap unmeasured mountain for our grave.
Flicker one cord of lightning north to south,
And mix in awful glories wood and cloud ;
We shall have rest, and find
Illimitable darkness for our shroud ;
We shall have peace then, surely, when thy mouth
Breathes us away into the darkness blind,
Then only kind.'

A HYMN TO THE SUN.

FROM the wave in thy purple ascend,
Crown of day, king of rays, lord of dreams.
Be thine excellent strength without end,
As eternal thy garment of beams.

In the tremble of manifold winds,
In the flush and the flicker of rose,
The waves they have seen thee arise,
And the voice of their clash thrills and throes.

Thou hast made the least brightest of these,
That roughens the glance of the sea,
To exult, to be fire, to be music,
At the sound of thy glory and thee.

In the hush of the ripple grow gold,
Till thou crumble the cloud in thy joy.
Let thy flakes and ray-branches unfold,
Smite the mist, mellow orb, and destroy.

O drench us with flame from thy wing :
Let thy bright arm break darkness like sleep :
Fling light, like a tempest that sings
And seethes from the core of the deep.

Be upon us, vast light, like a dream ;
Be about us, pure noon, like a fire ;
Enfold us, embrace us, extreme
Mighty glory beyond our desire.

From the fire of the fountains of God,
Swift art thou as thunder or death.
The blind silence of air thou hast trod,
Thou art shod with the speed of god's breath.

As a god thou art perfectly fair.

Thou art strong, thou art swift, thou art bright :
Thou shalt rouse thee, and stars from thy hair
Shall fall like a raining of light.

Our eyelids endure not thy blaze.

Thou art excellent over man's need.
We bow down our heads at thy gaze,
We quail at the pulse of thy speed.

Thou art young, thou art young in thy ways.

Earth ages : thou art as of yore,
Still robing the might of thy face
In fiercer effulgence and more.

Thou art God and untiring and strong :

Thou retest for pleasure, not need.
Though the way of thy glory be long,
Thy feet shall not falter or bleed.

Shall it weary thy steps like a steed,
 Shall it deepen thy breathing to pain?
Shall it dry thee away like a reed,
 Shall it sift thee and shake thee as grain?

Nay, rather the heart of thy fire
 Sheds over in bountiful rays,
As it touches the verge of desire
 Attaining the goal of thy ways.

Go about, olive cloud of day's end :
 Be silent, thou leaf and thou rose :
Float down like an island and wend
 God of sun to supremest repose.

THE DEATH OF HERACLES.

THE athlete Heracles had ending thus :
He drew that garment steeped in curses on,
And felt the poison eat his flesh bone-deep,—
Nor could he tear it from him, baleful web,—
And knew the mighty horror of his doom
Inevitable, clothing him throughout
With creeping flame intensest. And he said,
' My death is on me, comrade, in thy love
I charge thee nowise leave me till the end.
Thine will be full brief service, for I climb
This Cæta, there I sacrifice and die.'
And so we clomb together. All day long
We toiled up Cæta, and the evening fell
One red great ball of sun, and flared and split

The radiance : and he ever moaning clomb,
Moaning and shuddering, and huge agonies
Of sweat were on the muscles of his limbs,
And in his eyes a dumb pain terrible.
And now he clomb, and now in torment sat
With set teeth on some boulder, swaying slow
His head and rugged beard ; and all his breast
Lay heaving, and the volumes of its breath
Went up in dry hot vapour. Or he sat
Staring as in amazement. And I went
And touched him and he moved not, and again
I touched him. Suddenly the whole man leapt
Straightened on the instant, and addressed himself
To the sheer hill and leaning clomb. At length
It ceased into a level desolate
As death, a summit platform : the near clouds
Racked over us until the hill itself
Seemed giddy with their motion. Cruel winds
Flapt icily at our heated limbs, and seemed
To bite away in very cruelty

M

The few black shivering grasses in the peat,
Or tugged the fangs of heath long dead in cold.
And, when he saw the horror of the place,
He stayed himself and called with a great voice, 'Here;'
Suddenly calling it. And I began
To pile an altar at his word of all
The hill-side nourished, birch and pine and stunt
Gray sallow of the peat-tops. He that time
Tore at his flesh or heavily sobbing rolled
Against the shaly edges. And in fear
I built it, tremble-handed, dizzy-eyed ;
And when it rose he turned his face and cried,
'O comrade, is all ready?' And I said,
'All ready, master.' Then I lit a brand
Of resinous pine storm-riven, as I strake
Two clear hill-pebbles, gave blue fire free birth ;
So stood with a great beating heart to wait
The issue, ready with my torch. But he
Climbing disspread upon the wood his vast
And throbbing frame. And after a deep breath,

He gathered up his final strength to speak,
And reached his hand, and thus his speech found way :—
‘ This is the end, and I am bounded here,
And all my ancient triumph is decayed.
One agony enwraps me, scalp to heel ;
So I am made derision to the gods
That smile above my torment. This is he
The eminent of labours, conqueror,
The universal athlete, whose rash arm
Would stifle down the evils of the earth.
Behold, in what a mesh of woven pain
The deity confounds him. Think not thou
Hereafter, simple-hearted as was I,
To stand between the gods and their desire
That man receive no comfort only woes.
They hate for us to stand upon our strength
And love our degradation chiefly. Thou
Consider this, my friend, and think no shame
To let them have their wills, and stand aside,
Seeing my end, and all this ruined flesh

I thought so strong in beautiful living power ;
And, lo, a little poison quenches all
Into a writhing worm, ensheathed with fire ;
The smoke-sighs of whose torment shall ascend
A music to the sleepy gods, a dream
Lulling the dew of pleasure in their eyes
With echoes of mine infelicity.
Have they not cursed these mortals long ago ?
And every curse is fruitful as a seed :
And woe to him who dares disroot but one,
Thro' foolish loving of his fellow-men.
And now I die : fire only reaps away
This stain upon me. But, O comrade, learn
I may bequeath thee something, tho' I seem
So utterly naked of all honour now,
Because thou hast not left a stricken man.
Guard thou mine arrows, they to guard are thine.
The gall of hydra on their barbs is death.
And once a strange seer told me they should end
A mighty war of Hellas soon to be.

This fell not out in any day of mine.
Therefore, if blind-eyed Eris fling this dread
Upon the measure of thy time, rejoice,
For I have given thee its remedial power,
To use as thy heart bends thee. Any way
Guard these at least for ancient love of mine.'
And his voice brake ; and then he mightily called,
'Light it !' and I forbore ; and he called twice,
'If thou dost love me, light it ;' and I lit.
Then came the rushing creature of the flame
Over and under, writhing into spire
And branch and eager inward-licking rings,
And mighty stifling pine-smoke, volumed round.
And I endured no longer to behold,
Exceedingly unnerved, and wailing fled
Down the sheer hill, till in a secret vale
I found a corner, and there grovelling lay,
And brought my face into my hands, and hid
The daylight and its doings out. Yet still
Sung in mine ears the horrible hiss of the flame.

Until, a great while after, I had heart,
Again ascending, from the smouldered pyre
To gather very reverently his bones.
These I concealed in mounded sepulture,
Guarding the arrows, which I treasure now
To feed my vengeance. Thus died Heracles.

THE FALL OF THE TITANS.

BEAUTIFUL might
Of the earth-born children,
Brood of the Titans,
Ah, utterly fallen !
Ye were too noble to sit still
Beneath oppression ; other spirits
Gave Zeus his way. They said,
'Go to, he wields the thong of masterdom,
Exceedingly revengeful ; and his plagues
Bite to the marrow of his foes.
Under his feet is laid
Dominion, will ye then
Resist him ? Nay, not we.'

But ye had other song,
Ye Titans feasting with the lion-nerve,
Pressing your lips in, as the new young god
Played with his thunder, as a raw boy tries
His newly-handled sword
Upon the bark of trees.
Ye saw him, ye grim brood,
Scored with a many years, ere he had drawn
His baby milk ; ye saw him, and ye smiled
In that he called, ' Begone, ye old monsters, time
Has done with you. Did Saturn stand before
My bathing rays of glory ?
One finger of my strength
Wipes you away like drops of dew.'
Then with a whisper ye rose up,
Ye spake no word of council,
Ye came one-minded,
Still and very terrible.
Ye piled the mountains
To scale the cloud-line.

Heaven saw ye come, and all
Her cloud munitions trembled.
Then howling fled
Zeus and his tyrant-brood,
Shrill-voiced as girls,
And sheltered them awhile
In bestial forms.
Awhile, but ye were easy in the flush
Of conquest, unrevengeful, when ye might
Have crushed them out,
Mild were ye and forgave
Their extirpation utterly.
So these drew breath and guile
Reseated them : O Titan sons of earth,
O mild great brethren, when the coiling beast
Resumed the terrors of his battered crest,
There was no mercy for you.
Mercy ! nay, but horrible
Rapture of vengeance,
How they settled to it,

And all their eyes
Swam with the luxury of the feast.
Ye have seen a pack
Of wild dogs pulling
Against each other,
At some sick beast they have conquered ;
And all their teeth
Are clogged with their tearings,
And they snarl at each other
Half-blinded with blood-spurts.
Ay me, my Titans—
Why have ye fallen ?
Nobler than these which thrust you under night.
For ye were calm and great,
And when ye heard
The cry of earth your mother, whom these gods
Continually afflicted,
Ye flung yourselves on the new power, and just
Were stifling out the creature at its neck,
When it edged slily

Its secret teeth out,
And stung you down to darkness.

Beautiful might
Of the earth-born children,
Brood of the Titans,
Ah, utterly fallen.

THE SIREN TO ULYSSES.

MIGHTY in glory, king of patient brain,
Reef thy brown sails and gather up the oars :
The rest is here and limit of thy way.
The gods have here decreed thee thy repose.
The slant and driving valleys of green brine
Shall never rock thee more in gusty foam.
The gathered clouds against an angry moon,
The fleecy wave-rush on the shoaling crags,
Shall be remembered as abolished things,
The laboured preludes to thy larger joy.

Here is an island that the violet waves
Ripple against, uncrested, musical :
There is no turmoil on its lustrous seas,

Nor any day in which the singing birds
Pause thro' the measure of the fadeless year.

Thou who hast oared the long world's humid floor,
My lithe arms soon shall wind thee, and my mouth
Smoothe out the stain of travel from thy brow :
Soft and serene the bosom of my rest.
Silvering groves in twilight shall be ours,
Where the moon dare not come for secrecy,
But sends the corner of a peering beam.
While the leaves rustle, lest our kisses wake
The nested thrushes, philomels of dawn.
And I will sing thee songs of sacred lore
As low as breathing : and my lucid arms
Shall move the heavy fragrance of the night,
To soothe aside the glosses of my hair
From thy deep earnest eyes, and front of care,
Large, level, wise. My lips shall seem on thine,
As cowslip petals sweet and faint within,
Divinest in the hours of the prime dews.

An hour of this, my love, shall bring thee more
Of wisdom, than a century of toil
In seeing traffic places, marts of men,
Gray citadels on headlands, arsenals,
Quays, temples, harbours, races, customs, minds ;
Then intervals of buffet with the surge,
Hearing the crags beaten with reeling sprays.

Wisdom is thine, but I can give thee more :
For thou art subtle as a man alone :
But I, that am immortal, can reveal
The things which gods have shrouded from of old,
Fearing that man should know them and be wise ;
And, scaling on from height to height, attain
Their drowsy empire in his thirsty zeal
To grasp the utter knowledge of the earth.
For man is restless, but the God at rest :
And that enormous energy of man
Implies his imperfection : perfect they,
Exempt and firm, in no disquietude,

A consummation scorning thought beyond.

Wisdom is mine ; but I can give thee love ;
Which, twinned with wisdom, is most perfect life,
Love being crown of wisdom, unenjoyed
Save of the wise in its essential core,
An ecstasy beyond the fleeting sense ;
Which wisdom nearest godhead can attain
In glimpses only : but the herd of men
Love as the herds : the scale of higher love
Ascends with higher wisdom and the joy.

Thine oars are warpt, thy sails are worn awry :
Thy keels are cumbered with the boring shell :
Thy sailors loathe the long perpetual path
Where sweeps the waste vibration, vale on vale.
Thou only, King, art haughty in thy soul
To overbear the adverse elements
With human purpose sterner than the wave.
Thy face is set upon thy barren rock

To reach it in despite of gods or men.
But either death shall reach thee on the road
Of the moist waters ; or this island gained
Shall seem a bitter cheat for all thy toil.
For man must ever hold some wish before,
And drape it up in cloudy attribute
Beyond perfection, lest his laggard feet
Loiter beside the highway of the world.
But when the wish is scaled he casts it by,
And feigns another landmark far away,
Till his brain darkens and his feet are still.

Therefore he wisely lives, who wisely reaps
The dew upon the grass before the noon
Has quenched it ; taking wisely what the days
Lay at his feet, nor asking much beyond.
Love may be his and wisdom in degree ;
There is no further scope for mortal days :
The aims of highest natures all resolve
Themselves in these ; and these are in my hand

To bring thee : more than others' they are thine.
The seas are yonder crested in gray bloom,
But here is stormless ether evermore :
And love without one ripple on his rest,
And toiling done away with and no tear.

THE CHILDREN OF THE GODS.

Und meiden, im enkel
 Die eh'mals geliebten
 Still redenden züge
 Des Ahnherrn zu sehn.

Iphigenia. GOETHE.

THE rulers of Olympus owe no bond
 Of earthly kindred : in their cloudy state
 They see the wrong and anguish of their sons,
 And turn the brilliance of their eyes away.

Is it in nature that a mother's soul
 Forgets the child she held upon her breast?
 Can love to that same helpless little one
 Be utterly abolished, when the years
 Have made the fibres of those strengthless hands

Strong with the spear? Is human love so vile,
Ye gods, that ye despise it? Do you shrink,
Immortal fathers, by the cradle-head
To see your mighty likeness, as a babe,
Renewed in features of the helpless years?
Is there reproach in that small wailing voice
To dash the high reserve of majesty
To mere emotion? And these children grow
To men with record of the godlike eyes,
And something better than the common breed.
But can the father in his amber halls
Retain one dim least instinct towards his own,
To let them reap and hustle with the herd?
Is winter's interval less rough to these,
The god-begotten? Doth the sour ice rain
Flood by their vineyard scathless? Drought and dust
Vex them and vex their works, as other men's.
But those inexorable listless sires
Move round their drowsy eyes in much disdain
Of earthward care and all vicissitude.

They see the setting and the rising stars :
The storm is like a distant waterfall :
Except they listen, this they will not hear :
Except they will, they need not watch its wings,
That far, far down, one blot of violet shower,
Move on the terraced islands edged in foam,
Green bays of earth and patches of gray sea.

They slumber in their careless citadel.
The centuries are gathered to their homes,
Beneath them, ancients of an ageless dawn :
The strength and beauty of impregnable
Pavilions are their haven in a calm,
Deeper than silence,avenued in stars.
They will not raise a hand for any woe.
The pestilence and agonies of earth
Dare not invade the porches of their rest :
Only the sudden glory of a dream
Plays on the stern lip-corners like a light,
Nor turns them in their slumber on the cloud.

Infirm am I to dream that bond or blood,
Justice or love, as tender-minded men
Use them and die, are anything to these.
Not these it angers, that their sons have worn
Their feature in disaster infinite,
Debasing god-resemblance fallen low
With stain of earth ; as one a captive king
Slaves in his royal garment fray'd and old.

Compassion scales not to that terrible land,
If the sons perish wailing, with a gleam
Of the cold sun-dawn on their rigid face.
They raise a heavenward arm : it falls : and dust
Is in their fingers : answers thus the sire :
Those lips can name their father now no more.

These gods it moves not, that the cheeks grow old
Which in their bloom drew down immortal lips
To taste them, sweet as anything above
The cloud : gods changed the long monotony,
Eonian calm, and irksome eminence

For pastime : leaving desolate in heaven
Their Herès for the daughter of a day.
They scorned their empty thrones and passionless heights,
Weary of isolation due to gods,
To bathe in that strange river of desire ;
Which flows not from Olympus' girth of snow,
But skirts the lowland precincts of the race,
That knows no certain morrow, cheering these.

There is no memory in omnipotence :
They change their love-dreams as the meadows change
Their raiment month by month. The hireling slave
Mates with a bondsmaid longer. Human love
Of meaner creatures is a nobler thing.
But these when love is sated make an end
And crush remembrance, like an evil snake
That stings them in the asphodels of heaven ;
Where nothing comes, save that which fosters up
Eternal sense of self-sufficiency,
Careless of past, of forward days secure.

The earthly sons of these in narrow homes
By marges of the solitary seas
Give glory to their fathers, if the earth
Ripens the seed, or rounds the grape to wine,
That they may mingle them a little cup,
Or sheaf the threshold of the marsh for bread ;
And breed in turn new offspring handing down
The record of their lineage, bitterly
Remembered in the dim degenerate days ;
Or serving as an ancient lullaby
To rock the cradles of an alien race.

The generations pass, the gods abide.
The beauty and perfections of the earth
Are due to silence in a little while.
And other things displace them fair as these.
The hearth is broken where the children played :
The gradual wave is eating at the land,
The gradual river shallows up the sea.
The mounds are garnered with the bones of men.

We creep to silence : but the eternal earth,
With all her gods above her, evermore
Sleeps into night and wakens into dawn.

A LEAVE-TAKING.

KNEEL not and leave me : mirth is in its grave.

True friend, sweet words were ours, sweet words
decay.

Believe, the perfume once this violet gave

Lives—lives no more, though mute tears answer
' nay.'

Break off delay !

Dead, Love is dead ! Ay, cancelled all his due.

We say he mocks repose—we cannot tell—

Close up his eyes and crown his head with rue,

Say in his ear, Sweet Love, farewell ! farewell !

A last, low knell.

Forbear to move him. Peace, why should we stay ?

Go back no more to listen for his tread.

Resume our old calm face of every day :

Not all our kneeling turns that sacred head

Long dear, long dead !

Go with no tear-drop ; Love has died before :

Stay being foolish ; being wise begone.

Let severed ways estrange thy weak heart more ;

Go, unregretful, and refrain thy moan.

Depart alone.

HE MAY WHO CAN.

WE are wise, the world is old,
Antic changes shift and hold,
Boys will swear and maids will weep,
Weep and smile again.

Songs are for an April breast,
Feathers for a gleaming crest,
They may wake that need no sleep,
Sing, that feel no pain.

In a race young limbs are fleetest,
Boyhood's mouth must kiss the sweetest,
Palsy cheek and head of gray,
Mope beside thy fire.

Changes push us on our grave ;
Can we keep the orts we have ?
Ours is but a waning day,
What should we desire ?

THE PRODIGAL.

THE scath of sin is on my brow like lead.

The draff of swine is in my lips for bread.

Father, I know thy glory is not dead.

I will arise.

The servants in thy house are clothed and fed

Full and to spare. I perish here for bread.

My sin hath clothed thy presence with such dread,

I may not rise.

Mine, mine the guilt, all trespass deep and red :

Thine, thine the mercy on this fallen head.

Naked I come, yet thou shalt give me bread.

I will arise.

A FROSTY DAY.

GRASS afield wears silver thatch,
Palings all are edged with rime,
Frost-flowers pattern round the latch,
Cloud nor breeze dissolve the clime ;

When the waves are solid floor,
And the clods are iron-bound,
And the boughs are crystall'd hoar,
And the red leaf nail'd a-ground.

When the fieldfare's flight is slow,
And a rosy vapour rim,
Now the sun is small and low,
Belts along the region dim.

When the ice-crack flies and flaws,
Shore to shore, with thunder shock,
Deeper than the evening daws,
Clearer than the village clock.

When the rusty blackbird strips,
Bunch by bunch, the coral thorn,
And the pale day-crescent dips
New to heaven a slender horn.

THE POWER OF INTERVAL.

A FAIR girl tripping out to meet her love,
Trimmed in her best, fresh as a clover-bud.
An old crone leaning at an ember'd fire,
Short-breath'd in sighs and moaning to herself—
And all the interval of stealing years
To make that this, and one by one detach
Some excellent condition, till Despair,
Faint at the vision, sadly, fiercely blinds
Her burning eyes on her forgetful hands.

A SUNRISE EFFECT.

I LOOK'D across the river for the day.
The clouds came not, the air was very slow,
Till on their ridges past an underglow,
And tinged in amber cadence all the gray.

Then one clear star, set in a branch of rose,
Drew in before the river of bold light,
Foiling the ragged cloud to left and right,
To sort a crystal lake of raying glows.

I could not rest ; a wilderness of mind
Was strong within me ; love and shame and thought
Of days behind, at that one instant caught
To reason from the mental store-house blind.

Last thou, fair lily head, beyond night's fall
Steep'd in warm sleep, sweet central wish of all !

O

DAFFODILS.

I QUESTION with the amber daffodils,
Sheeting the floors of April, how she fares ;
Where king-cup buds glow out between the rills
And celandine in wide gold beadlets glares.

By pastured brows and swelling hedge-row bowers
From crumpled leaves the primrose bunches slip,
My hot face roll'd in their faint-scented flowers,
I dream her rich cheek rests beside my lip.

All weird sensations of the fervent prime
Are like great harmonies, whose touch can move
The glow of gracious impulse : thought and time
Renew my love with life, my life with love.

When this old world new-born puts glories on,
I cannot think she never will be won.

A FUTURE.

Thy lore may be the vocal memories
Of idols overthrown, imperial hours :
Thy lute may moan perpetual monodies
Of desecrated bowers.

Thy creed may be to move in solemn shade,
With drooping head, a dream upon an earth
Of careless creatures—proudly disarray'd
Of any masking mirth.

Thy rest may be a rest we cannot know—
Beyond sleek envy's scorn and cant of sneers—
Pervaded with the secret strength of woe,
Yet consecrate to tears.

BE WISE IN TIME.

DISPOSE thy loves in realms of mellow flowers :
Truth is not fooled to make his stay with thee.
Thy faith is but the burnish of the hours,
And freedom is a nobler thing than love.
So let me be
Free as the cloud or river to remove.

Bud of the rose, with bright untruthful eyes,
Time now thy slave shall be thy tyrant soon,
To quench the music of thy dove replies
Gentle as sleep, and jar to barren string
The tender tune
Thy lips could murmur like the gales of spring.

While thou art queen in thy great yellow hair,
And thy lip's empire holds in thrall Desire ;
While Love is as a bird beneath thy snare,
Thou wilt not heed. But Fate has hoard of days
To taint and tire
The sweetest blossom of the meadow ways.

Love is a field of weed and broken sand,
A maiden garlanding sepulchral urns,
Or a child singing, where on either hand
Are rivers ; one is Birth, a lovely stream ;
The other turns
To Lethe by the lonely realms of dream.

AT EVENING.

THE pilgrim cranes are moving to their south.

The clouds are herded pale and moving slow.

One flower is wither'd in the warm wind's mouth,

Whereby the gentle waters always flow.

The cloud-fire wanes beyond the lighted trees.

The sudden glory leaves the mountain dome.

Sleep into night, old anguish mine, and cease

To listen for a step that will not come.

THE NYMPH'S PROTEST.

WHY art thou fallen, sacred earthborn might,
Craft of the noblest, wherefore hast thou failed ?
The earthborn Titans fell ; and Nature's voice
In branch and cavern, reed and water sound,
Fell wailing in the new supremacy.
While he, the tyrant, in his glory-seat
Wiped the red death exultant from his blade,
And turned him to his golden rest again.

But a disdainful Atè-vengeance came,
And floated like a dream about his halls
On to the amber-tables and the rest
Of that Elysian feasting ; as it neared
His brother gods pushed back their goblet rims,

And shuddered by their wine with joyless eyes.
That presence with pale brows, impalpable,
Could brave them in their central citadel
Above the cloud-rack in the belted rose
And orange vapours, so that even gods
With livid lips sate loathing food divine.

But she, the curse of Atè, came not on
Near those soft-bosomed meadows, where the race
Of heroes in conclusion grandly calm
Eternally repose in ageless flowers.

O sister nymphs, our Titan sires are low.
They are smitten down beneath the tyrant's wheels.
They are chained throneless in the barren dark ;
Could our love raise them, could our worship send
One, least of all these comfortable rays,
That glide about the world and cherish it,
To reach their prison places ? Could they hear
So very far the voices of our love !

Uncrowned, dishonoured, out of hope, dethroned,
They are our gods or none.

Deck out thy heaven

With rainbow gléams, thou tyrant ; build thy rest
Securely : bid the scented asphodel
Sweeten thy lands where winter slays no seed ;
Make glorious all thy precinct floor with bloom.
Thou canst not be the master of that fear,
Coeval with thy reigning, which shall wound
Thy feet on thorns amid the heavenly flowers.

Nymphs are we, stained with earth, and undivine
As these accept divineness, rulers new ;
For us no hectic season of the gods,
No dull stagnation of eternal light ;
But real Earth, imperfect, bountiful,
Sweet in the dædal change of hour and air ;
Sweet in the new bud pushing the wan leaves."
Rule in thy realm ; and let us breathe apart,
O leave us sundered from the haughty seat

Of thy predominance and withering power,
God-queller Zeus, whose mercy is a dream.

Give us the kindly earth, its fleeting love,
Love tho' a mortal one ; and hand in hand
Among the ripen'd edges of the lands,
And haven-pastures of the speckled bird,
We will repeat a vow for each white star
That silvers heaven about at time of sleep.
And our wild kisses faint and fervent hands
Shall be as revelations to our soul
Of sweet love, fleeting, born of earth and dust,
Still beautiful beyond all births of time ;
Whose human glory sets the gods to shame
And pales the frigid splendours of their realms,
Cold in the sameness of perpetual dawn.

Love shall endure tho' the stars age and fall ;
The tyrant hath no arrow against Love.
His strength is as a broken leaf to slay

The eternal. He is yesterday's new god ;
He built his recent throne, and stained it red ;
And hardly from his grinding chariot-wheels
The drops of carnage yet are dried away.

Mortal art thou, my lover, and thy years
Fade as thy chaplet or my girdle flowers ;
And yet thy lips are sweeter than a god's.
I could not love thee more if quite divine.
I am faint, my love, to nestle in thy delight ;
I am broken up with anguish, if an hour
I am held from thee. Ah, I strive to thee
In my blind sleep, and my mouth lonely feigns
To reach thy kisses in the paths of dream.
Be with me always ; we will find each noon
A sleepy palace chosen for delight,
In gracious herbage under apple-roofs
The fruit is heavy upon orchard boughs.

Leave me this earth and haven of my love,

And, Zeus, unenvied, rule on weary clouds,
Drowse in thy golden precinct, O supreme,
And crush with tyrant heel the gentle race,
Chained underneath the world, unconquered yet.
Great placid gods of nature, whose sole crime
Was to have ruled, ere in the sides of heaven
Thou camest up to take thy throne, with hands
Stained over with the lees of deadly wine.
Their very record galls thee on thy throne
With silent protest at the upstart king.
Their patient foreheads scored with fiery seams
Sustained benignant empire ere thy day.
And this men know and teach it to their sons,
How thou hast changed the old harmonious earth
To discord, and for singing given men tears.
And, hating this remembrance, thou hast bound
The elder powers in darkness, vainly wise ;
Torture thou canst, but not abolish these.

But thou console me, patient mother Earth,

Who, uncomplaining, dost endure his hand
In plague of shrill wind and much driving storm.
Thou canst restore thy desolated lands ;
Thy shining woods shake off the thunder-rain.
The crushed flower straightens out its beaten stem ;
The sun returns between the broken clouds.
His radiance is not thine, nor owed to thee ;
Nor canst not tear him from the arch of heaven.
Unbidden of thee the festival of Spring
Arrives on little pausing puffs of breeze,
And calls the white flower-faces up from sleep.

ODE TO PAN.

THE dædal and delightful earth,
Who may declare the secret of her birth ?

In wonder and the mist of days,
Between gray heaven and glancing main,
The ancient powers in mystic ways,
They bound her with a giant chain.
So that she always might remain
Term to the wasted stars, eye to the risen rays.
They set around her, as a raiment, sea,
And vested her about with shining cloud,
That softened all its domes continually,
As to a music, when the wind grew loud.

They ringed the giant mountains firm as death ;
Flake after flake upon them came the snows,
Till spring was warming underneath
Their hoarded silence into vernal glows.
How then it snapt like a chain from its sleeping,
Fountain on fountain, with sound thro' the hills
Trembling, exuberant, gleaming and leaping,
Wrestle and trouble of down-going rills.
The shivering forests hearkened, and they cried
To the warm vernal waters in delight.
' Our tendril roots are cold, our branches dried,
Sweetest child of the hill, give us wave warm as light ;
Lap and bathe, drench us thro' down our dry torrent
seams
With coiling enormous sweet limitless streams.'

Let the great light be on us like music from thy lips ;
Light and water flooding down with sound ;
Smite the gray frozen branches, until their perished tips
Rush out in crumpled leaflets at a bound.

Let the white resinous ends throb with the bud within,
So shall the wood lead out, with a song and a musical
 din,
The tender green of its arches, light as a vapour thin.

So grandly then the forest music runs,
As the great world goes on and takes no fear,
Guarded of giant stars and planet suns,
Into her burning daylight of the year.
Surely to her this winter is death-night
Of nature, and the summer this earth's day.
How should she pausing love the seasons' flight
Until the flower is pleasant in her way?

Lonely of man stood nature at her prime ;
About her woods there was no human tone,
The melody of birds at morning time
Praising the gods alone.
Then on the bosom of the earth arose
Man, god's ploughman of the soil ;

They gave him brain to understand his woes,
And made his palms strong for perpetual toil,
But taught him theirs were stronger than his own ;
Tho' he lift hands and moan,
They were his lords ; and lords must ever be
Almighty, tho' they needed his bent knee,
The incense of his wonder given in tears ;
How should omnipotence or ageless years
Avail the mighty, with none weaker nigh
To feel amazement at their deity ?
With only brother gods as strong and great
To watch and marvel none, how should a god create ?
And yet these men they planted there to raise
Up to a cold perfection out of reach
The tribute hymn in season to their praise
With rich blood often of slain tender beast ;
These men grew mutinous whom they would teach,
And questioned with themselves, ' the great are least
And these our lords our henchmen ; in that they
Rule not themselves, are frail in earthly way,

P

Hate to do justice, drowse at lustful feast ;
Are these the rulers that we can obey ?'
Then in a laughter turned themselves away,
And crowned their reason for a god and great,
Which all celestials chiefly loathe and hate.
Therefore mysterious omen, floating flame,
And nightly portent ringed with starry fire,
Dismayed the roaming, tribeless, kingless race,
Who builded god in thought to their desire.
Until the golden-locked one, Themis, came
And taught them ritual, justice, mercy, grace,
And many an old forgotten phrase
Of orphic hymn, age-altered yet the same ;
And choral flutings and well-kneaded cakes
To Pan the bud-expander ; who awakes
Nature, and is a god in nature's core
Seated, and one with nature evermore.
Pan is no cloudy ruler in dim haze,
No king of air-belts delicate afar,
But in the ripening slips and tangled ways

Of the blue cork-woods where the goat-herds are.
And we may find him by the bullrush pits,
Where the hot oxen chin-deep soaking lie ;
Or in the mulberry orchard grass he sits
With milky kex and marrowy hemlocks nigh ;
Where silken floating under-darnels tie
And mat the herbage of the summer-floor.
A god he is, this Pan, content to dwell
Among us, nor disdains the damp and hot wood-smell.
He is a god and more.

He loves the flaky boles of peeling pines
Brown as the sand ; he loves the languid vines,
As the fruit darkens in their drooping leaves ;
The crumpled poppies garnered among sheaves
Softens his eyes with colour as of dreams.
The first few crisping leaf-falls on his ear
Herald the wasting year.
He feels the ivies push their stem-feet up
Against the beech-bole all in seams between,

And broaden downwards many a rounded cup
In orbéd tops of mealy buds white-green.
Pan too will watch in open glare unseen
The quiet locust seething in the blaze
Upon the vine-leaves of the quarry ways.

By broken margins seated of the main
The dog-troop's sour sharp yelping he will hear,
As they go flushing up gull, heron, crane,
And noisy at some stranded carcase tear.
Pan sees some maiden bloom with shining hair
Descending slowly from a temple porch,
Her sandals come in flashes like a torch,
Bound on some service to the image there ;
Leaning she holds the myrtle bushes near,
And rinses from the lowest marble stair
Her sacrificial urn in currents clear.
Ay, and this Pan will watch the tillage yield,
The mastich coppice and the millet field.
The brown rough-bearded bondsman sits thereby

To hasten with long goad and urgent cry
The oxen treading barley round and round.
He scoops with eager finger for his meat
A pulpy-headed gourd, and to the ground
Tosses the rind, and watchful from his seat
Cries to his oxen lest they slacken pace.
These sights doth Pan consider, and all ways
Of human toil, all doings, all desire ;
Whereby the new gods bend men to obey,
And give them hands of lead and brains of fire ;
And crush them with the heel of iron sway,
And weaken them with labour, lest they rise,
In Titan fashion proud against the skies.

THE COUNT OF SENLIS AT HIS TOILET.

WHAT scrap is this, you thrust upon me now?
Some grievance-bill ; I'm sick of seeing such.
What can these burghers always want with me ?
I am weary of petitions, yet they pour.
This is a brave word, liberty, indeed ;
And now-a-days each lean and mongrel whelp
Littered about these streets chimes in his voice
For liberty. I loathe the letters' sound.
How dare you bring this in at tiring time,
Fretting my soul ? This chain is dull as brass,
Lean down, you caitiff, lacquer up the gold ;
Rub for your life, rub. There's another stone

Flawed in the centre droplet, where it shows,
Cracked like a nut ; why, man, it was a gem,
An amethyst as clear as a girl's eye.
And you must crash my chain about like sacks
Of Kathern pears ; there are no servants, none,
As I remember service, in these days ;
A new time pestilent ; each clown must ride,
And nobles trudge behind him in the dirt—
Lay out my murrey-coloured velvet suit ;
How you detain me fumbling ; knave and fool,
Don't ruffle back the pile of Genoa's looms
With your rank sweating fingers the wrong way.
Do you suppose I wear a wild cat's fur
For your amusement ? You must play these tricks,
With only half an hour to banquet time ;
And when I rail, stand helpless, gibbering there,
As if a nobleman could tire himself
Like a field scare-crow against time and grain,
You'd have me round my shoulders toss a sack,
And give my hair one shake, and make an end,

And so stride in among the gray-green eyes,
And dainty hands, and little perfumed arms,
And white smooth laughing kittens at their play ;
Dear hearts, I think they call it love-making,
A purr begins it and a scratching ends,
Or each succeeds alternate ; bless them all :
You, with these darlings waiting, prove a snail,
Your careless hands would send me to the feast
Much as a diver from the castle moat,
Slid in disorder. You've the mind, it seems,
And leisure to disgrace me. Try, my knave.
You that are born upon my liberties,
And I've the right of gibbet on my lands,
At least my fathers had it ; that's the same ;
If time is able to filch lawful rights
Away from any man without his leave,
Then let time void the ducats from my pouch,
When I refuse to spend them. Have then heed ;
And now this gentle rabble, that I own,
Have bribed you here, my thrall, to bring me in

A string of rank seditions on a rag
Of calfskin, at the very time and hour,
You know, it chiefly sets me out of gear
To find thus rudely thrust beneath my nose
The wrongs of carrion butchers, the sweet sighs
Of carters, longing after equal laws.
To push these in, of all the hours of the day,
To vex me here half-dressed, is shameless deed.
Consider only, certain moments hence
The banquet summons finds me, pest of heaven !
With my mind ruffled, half my clothes awry ;
I'm sent among the damsels at the board,
With a sour taste of serfdom in my mouth ;
I am put from my whole amenity ;
My pleasing power and courteous manner lost ;
For such light sunny ways will not beam out,
Unless I can forget, ignore, abolish,
The sweating boors penned in their styes below.

Man, man, is this a time for wrong and right ?

The doublet bulges, the ruff hangs awry,
 Limp as the wool of some damp wether's fleece.
 The feast is ready—they are going down,—
 I hear Count Edmund, coxcomb, on the stairs—
 You loiter, varlet, and I'm late ; your deed ;
 You thrust your charters when I ought to dress ;
 Charters indeed. I, that have known it long,
 Have never seen this precious burgh of mine
 Save on the eve of starving thro' my dues,
 At least their song has run so all these years.
 And yet they are fed enough to roar out loud,
 ' Behold, we starve ! '—My ruffles ; that's the left,
 You idiot—And they breed too, breed like rats ;
 So much the better for my toll per head.
 They will not starve ; I'd like to see it done.
 They can cheat hunger in a hundred ways ;
 They rob my saw-pits clean of bran for bread ;
 There never were such greedy knaves as these.
 They clear my outer court of nettles next ;
 They boil them, so I'm told, I hope they sting.

Well, I shall not complain, it saves the scythe,
And we great lords must wink and let ourselves
Be pilfered by the small fry halter-ripe.
It is the doom and meed of noble blood,
To be a prey to clowns ; and God, He knows,
I am not one of those who grudge the poor.
And so my kindness fills them full of corn,
And rains this plague down in petitions thus.
I am soft-hearted, they presume on this—
And I will singe clean out your fishy eyes
With white-hot tongs, unless you make that cloak
Fall smoother on the carriage of my sword.
Why, you lean hound, whom mange will soon destroy,
And save your hanging, where's the scabbard brace ?
See, you have made it stick right out behind,
Like Satan's sister's broom-stick. And the cooks
Are at it dishing up. You fumble there,
As if the precious minutes stood like sheep,
And you'd the day to lie upon the grass
And count the crows. There, that goes better—Come,

I'll glance on this petition—What is here ?

'That our starvation is no idle tale,

Of his own seeing our liege lord must know ;

Since his own noble and peculiar pack,

In tufted sedges at the mort o' th' deer,

Lately unearthed a lean white woman dead—'

Confound the knaves ; and granting this were so,

This is a delicate and savoury thing

Just before dinner to remind me of.

This shall spoil all I meant to do for them ;

How dare they ? Why this same wan rigid face,

Must thrust itself upon my grounds and die,

And sicken several pretty damsels found,

And spoil the hunting of a score of lords ;

And damp the show. No wonder ; I myself

Felt rather squeamish half a dial's turn,

And found strong waters needful to reset

The impassive mettle of high breeding's ways.

And then my Kate, who'll laugh a lawyer dumb,

Was all that evening dull as a town clock ;

And later on—here catch this trash—a word
More and I clap a double impost on,
And make them starve in earnest. Tell them so,
Sir thief, my varlet, their ambassador—
Enough of this, why drivell we on these ?
Get, for Saint Job's sake, forward with my beard.
You push this trivial business in my jowl,
And make me dawdle over urgent cares,
And tice me to peruse, while your rough hands
Will turn me out a Scythian for the feast,
In barbarous disorder. Is that all ?
My ring and gloves ;—Count Edmund, there he goes ;
How that fool brags about his pedigree.
His veins must run pure ichor, ours mere blood.
I'd gladly try my rapier on his ribs,
And bleed him much as any plough-boy bleeds.
How can a man speak any such vain words ?—
I hear him swinging down the corridor,
With all his plumage and bedizened hide
As clean as a cobsman's—trust him for that—

He has no thought above his skin and gloves,
Or at what angle his trim beard should grow :
Despatch, thou slave ; complete me, or indeed
He'll be before me with the duchess yet.

IN ARCADIA.

LOVE of the rosy neck and restless hair,
Theme of my song and queen of my despair ;
The vales are breezeless and the ring-dove's voice
Sweetens or ebbs her patient aching noise.
See how the morning's footfall, steamed in blue,
Melts from the unveiled flowers a cloudy dew.
Beyond, are seas of leaves and branching plain,
And burning islands on a rippled main.

Thy shepherd in the shadow of the hills,
In places crisp with bloom, near drip of rills,
I teach the forest-lawns my trembling notes,
While at some wide-mouthed orchis the bee floats ;
I modulate the brooding of my loves,
Till ripe noon silences the languid doves.

'The petals of the rose are widest here,
The hyacinths are heavy everywhere.
The purple vetch rings over the dead pine
With arms as tender as the eglantine.
Learn thou of her, for tho' she cling and climb,
Her loving comes too late in narrow time.
She has a little dew for tears to weep—
We love a little here, and fall asleep
In earth; are fresh woods mingled with our dreams?
The reedy music of Lethæan streams
Drives by the dreaming ear, and will not cease.
The dead are past our grieving; not for these
The tamarisk thickets waver; no light hours
Teach the branch music; nor red fountain flowers
Shall hear the wave pulse out ambrosial sleep,
Or lean them toward the silver drifting deep.

Love is too brief in prime to be denied.
His fruit scarce ripens ere its bloom is dried.
His seasons surely they are full of change,

His rose cheeks wither, his light hand is strange.
His dove voice falters into heavy tones,
His warm lips alter into perished ones.
Ripe at thy hand love's glowing fruitage see ;
Gather, ere some rough wind may blast his tree.

Why wilt thou vex me with thy stranger eyes ?
The martins twitter round the silver skies,
Go gleaming all about the lands, and rest
Each by her mate-bird in love's narrow nest.
Come to my soft love precinct and sweet home,
Near where the wood-bee hoards her amber comb.
There deep woods swoon with solitude divine ;
I wait thee there arm-deep in flowery twine.
There gleam flushed poppies in among gray tares ;
Grape-clusters mellow near, and tumbled pears
Are brown in orchard grass. The fern-owl calls
At eve across the cloven river-falls,
Whose flood leaves here an island, there a swan ;
Her crystal down slant sun-rays redden on.

Q

Come, ere the full green fails in mountain ways,
Come, ere one sterile branch of autumn sways.
Come, ere one crisp leaf ambers in the field ;
Before that coronal my hand concealed
Trembling beneath the lintel of thy bower,
Hath pined one rose or shed one violet flower.
Descend, my dear one, golden are the groves,
Where, under umbrage of delicious coves,
The dusky cygnets sail by sires of snow,
And moor-hens paddle where the tide is slow.
And sedge-hair brushes the rosed filbert's cheek ;
And bunch and reed are mirrored in the creek,
And tremble in the under-gliding wave.
The kid comes butting where broad flag-leaves lave
And drip into the dimpling water-swell ;
He, blinking thro' the grasses, seems to dwell
In leaning thirst with eager nostrils wide,
And sailing fishes watch him, golden-eyed.

I waste my pipings ; ah, vain love-tune cease ;

The rocks reply ; she is more hard than these.
Tho' Love lie slain she will not raise his head ;
Tho' he come starving will not reach him bread ;
She is untender, ruthless, will not weep,
Her mouth is colder than the lips of sleep.
Tho' there is song of love in every nest,
She will not harken, lest he spoil her rest,
And kiss her hard bright eyes to gentle tears,
And bind her breast with flower of stranger fears ;
She will not harken, tho' the sky-lark goes
Away in heaven, and, steeped in golden glows,
Sings, ' Let us love.' Love is the linnet's tale.
The doves change music with the nightingale.
The thrush re-murmurs, emulous of song ;
One love-need tingles the sweet land along.

She hath no need of any loving ways.
To her Love's gold is dross, and dust his praise.
She is silent, as a cloud whose freight is snow ;
Robed in a frigid glory is her brow.

Her white limbs gleam along the tangled pass,
Her bright feet nestle in the mountain grass.
Her lips are cruel with disdain, and wise
In scorning ; very noble are her eyes.
She has filled indeed my heart, as some first dove
Possesses with one song the early grove.

O fair one, is it wisdom to refuse ;
To make Love laughter, scorn his gracious dues ?
Ay me ; time hastens, in whose hand are set
Sourness for savour, and for song regret,
For rose lips wrinkles, for caresses tears.
There is no sheaf in all his barren years,
But grayness and salt waste of broken sands
Whence none return with fruit between their hands,
And where all lips are black with water-need,
And all sweet maidens wither ; stubs of reed
Whistle in mire, and all things else are dead.
Then, seeing youth is brief and age is dread,
Relent, and whisper, ' Love, my scorn is gone.

I am changed, and sigh after Love's touch and tone.
I am broken for his voice, who did not heed.
I am slain with needing love, who did not need ;
Save me, whom thou hast vainly called to save,
Lest I go maiden to the barren grave.'
Shall I not answer, dove, who have loved thee long,
'Thy prayer is sweeter than a banquet song ;
New tender captive in the honey lands,
I will bind down with kisses thy fair hands,
And have no ruth to lead thee garland-bound,
Thro' great woods heavy with their summer sound.
Till in an oak-glade lovelier than the rest,
A temple rises columned to the west.
Sacred it is to a baby god and blind,
There, O my sweet, our haven let us find.'

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